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It is the purpose of this study to examine certain stylistic features of the medieval French chronicle of Robert de Clari, La Conquête de Constantinople, and to provide necessary biographical data concerning the author and historical information pertaining to the period of history which the chronicle describes. Despite the early state of development of the French language, it was found that the chronicle exhibited a conscious application of rudimentary stylistic devices, such as dialogue and narrative effectively employed, the use of the digression as a stylistic device, and varied methods of description. Philippe Lauer's edition of La Conquête de Constantinople prepared for the Classiques Français du Moyen Age Series, was the basis of the study. An outline of the chronicle has been included which contains notes of an historical nature to clarify certain inaccuracies within the work. Maps illustrating the route of the Fourth Crusade and a plan of the city of Constantinople in 1204, date of the Fourth Crusade, have been included in an appendix.

STYLE AND HISTORY IN LA CONQUÊTE DE CONSTANTINOPLE
" A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

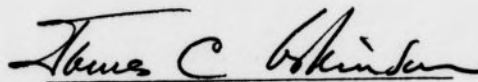
by

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"

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Robert de Clari was a thirteenth century pilgrim who participated in the Fourth Crusade. He composed a chronicle of what he saw and of what he surmised took place during the course of that crusade. The work is of historical importance because of the eye-witness account it presents of the events of this notorious Christian venture. From a literary point of view, it is not without merit, for it is one of the earliest extant histories of a French venture, written in the French language, and in prose. It must not be assumed that the chronicle is a polished literary masterpiece; it is not. It is, however, a fledgling attempt at expression in prose of an historical happening.

It is not the purpose of this thesis to oppose Robert de Clari, historian, to Robert de Clari, writer, nor to review the age-old question of history versus literature, for, as will be demonstrated, the chronicle of Robert de Clari stands as a valuable document in both areas. This thesis is not to be supposed a definitive history of the Fourth Crusade. A chapter dealing with the Fourth Crusade is included to situate the chronicle in its

proper historical setting, and to familiarize the reader with those facts which Robert de Clari describes in his work.

After these introductory remarks which compose the first chapter, necessary historical background material to the chronicle will be presented in Chapter II. A third chapter provides biographical information on Robert de Clari, and furnishes pertinent data on the only known manuscript of the chronicle. For the convenience of the reader a synopsis of the Conquête de Constantinople is found in Chapter IV; the chronicle is schematically outlined and the flavor of the original has been retained through use of passages from the work. Certain notes of an historical nature accompany this chapter, often to identify or elaborate upon persons or places Robert de Clari names. A fifth chapter deals with major elements of Robert de Clari's literary style, and in the sixth chapter a brief conclusion to the discussion is offered. It may be pointed out that there has not been included any discussion of the linguistic elements of the chronicle. Such an omission is intentional, for a study of linguistic characteristics of early thirteenth-century Picard would demand the attention of a skilled linguist. Indeed, such a study has been made by Peter Florian Dembowski in his recent book, La Chronique de Robert de Clari: Etude de la Langue et du Style.

Scholarship on Robert as compared to his contemporary, Villehardouin, is slight. In the 1830's medieval scholarship enjoyed a new vogue, and there was a marked revival of interest in the establishment of texts of medieval manuscripts. It was at this time that a flurry of articles pertaining to our Picard pilgrim appeared in certain scholarly journals, the Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de Picardie, and the Mémoires de l'Académie nationale des sciences, arts, et belles lettres de Caen for example. In 1924 Philippe Lauer prepared an edition of La Conquête de Constantinople for the Classiques Français du Moyen Age series. This is the definitive edition of the chronicle, and Lauer's introduction to this edition remains a valuable and informative scholarly document.

Perhaps the best known contemporary literary critic who discusses Robert de Clari is Albert Pauphilet. In addition to brief introductory remarks found in Le Legs du Moyen Age and Historiens et Chroniqueurs du Moyen Age, Pauphilet has also published an article in Mélanges de Linguistique et de Littérature offerts à A. Jeanroy, "Robert de Clari et Villehardouin," and several articles in Romania, most notably, "Sur Robert de Clari." Pauphilet's articles are concise and clearly written, and provide a valuable insight into the literary aspect of the chronicle. In 1936 Edgar Holmes McNeal published an excellent

translation of the work, based on the edition of Philippe Lauer, and also upon study of the only extant manuscript, in the Royal Library of Copenhagen. McNeal has also provided a lengthy introduction and copious footnotes which identify persons and places Robert mentions. His translation stands as a landmark work of its type, and is invaluable to the study of Robert de Clari. The most recent work to appear on the chronicle is Peter Florian Dembowski's La Chronique de Robert de Clari: Etude de la Langue et du Style. The book deals, as earlier noted, with linguistic elements in the chronicle, and with certain literary traits.

This presentation will touch upon various ones of these, and will offer a fresh look at La Conquête de Constantinople and at its historical significance and literary value.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The term crusade when applied to the Middle Ages generally refers to the series of expeditions from West to East occurring between 1095 and 1291, the era in which the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem existed on the Syrian coast. Various theories have been formulated to explain the impetus behind this two-hundred-year phenomenon. It was first of all a religious movement; "Deus lo volt!" became the battlecry of the early crusaders. The crusade was also a holy war, directed against the Infidel, for the glory of God. Thus the concept of pilgrimage came to be associated with the crusading movement; whether one went alone, a "passagium parvum," or as a member of a group, a "passagium generale," the benefits accrued, instant remission of sins, were the same. The crusades have been said to represent a natural migratory movement of peoples, a kind of medieval "Völkerwanderung." And finally, there are economic historians who maintain that the crusades were a form of colonization and medieval imperialism.¹

Certainly each of these theories is to some extent valid, but the Middle Ages were primarily a time of faith

¹ A. S. Atiya, Crusade, Commerce and Culture (Bloomington, 1962), pp. 17-20.

and of war, and hence, the concept of a holy war dedicated to the glory of God came to dominate. Bands of pilgrims were continually traveling between Europe and Jerusalem, but eight separate expeditions were momentous enough to be called crusades. The first of these expeditions (1095-99) enjoyed such a success that the undertaking of future such ventures was assured. A Latin kingdom had been established in Jerusalem, and its maintenance and expansion were of prime importance to subsequent expeditions. The Second Crusade (1146-48) ended in a stalemate, little of a positive nature being accomplished. Then, in 1171 Saladin was elected caliph of Egypt. An intrepid warrior, he launched a campaign which culminated in the fall of Jerusalem in 1187. The Third Crusade (1189-92) was Christendom's ineffectual reply to Saladin's successes. The conquest of Cyprus was the sole advantage the Christians acquired, in spite of the emperor and two kings who lent their support to the expedition: Henry II of England, who died and was replaced by his son Richard; Philip Augustus of France; and Frederick I (Barbarossa) of Germany, who drowned en route while bathing in a river. Jerusalem remained in the hands of the Infidel, and the Latin kingdom was reduced to several littoral cities.

In January of 1198 Innocent III, one of the most able and ambitious of the medieval pontiffs, ascended the

papal throne and almost at once made known his wishes for a Fourth Crusade which would re-establish Western Christendom's holdings in the East and which would strengthen papal prestige in the West.² March, 1199, was the tentative date set by Innocent III for the embarking of the crusading armies, but at that time not even the most meager of forces had been assembled despite the frequent urgings of the Pope. At the end of 1199 Innocent III attempted to finance the crusade by an income tax imposed on the clergy, but this special tax was not very successful.³

It was not until November, 1199, that an expeditionary force came into existence. A tourney was in progress at Ecry, castle of Count Thibault of Champagne, when the assembled barons began to discuss the proposed Fourth Crusade. With the encouragement of an itinerant preacher, Fulk of Neuilly, who had been commissioned by Innocent III to preach the crusade, many of the nobles present "took the cross," and notified the Pope of their decision. Their enthusiasm was contagious, and by late autumn of 1200, a crusading army of eight to ten thousand men had been enrolled, which was based on the ordinary feudal levy in

² James A. Brundage, The Crusades, A Documentary Survey (Milwaukee: Marquette Univ. Press, 1962), p. 190.

³ K. M. Setton et al., A History of the Crusades (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1962), II, 156-57.

composition and organization.⁴ In February of 1201, French envoys negotiated with Venetian shipbuilders to supply the army with the necessary vessels for the voyage. The estimate of the size of the crusading army which the envoys gave to the Venetians was more than three times greater than the actual size of the army, and was a major source of the difficulties which would plague the expedition throughout the course of the crusade.⁵ In addition, in May of 1201 the Count of Champagne died. Elected to assume leadership of the crusade was Boniface, the Marquis of Montferrat; the choice was far from judicious, for he had intimate family connections in the Holy Land⁶ and was a vassal and loyal friend of the German king, the

⁴ Ibid., p. 160

⁵ Ibid., p. 162.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 164-65: "Boniface's father, William the Old, had fought in the Second Crusade, and had been captured fighting at Hattin in 1187. His eldest brother, William Longsword, had married Sibyl, daughter of Amalric of Jerusalem (1176), and was posthumously the father of King Baldwin V. A second brother, Renier, had married, in 1180, Maria, a daughter of the emperor Manuel Comnenus, had become caesar, and was poisoned by Andronicus Comnenus in 1183. A third brother, Conrad, had married, in 1185, Theodora, a sister of the emperor Isaac Angelus, had also become caesar, and helped put down a serious revolt against Isaac in 1185. He had escaped from the fiercely anti-Latin atmosphere of Constantinople, saved Tyre from Saladin in 1187, married Isabel, the heiress to the kingdom of Jerusalem (whose first husband Humphrey of Toron, was still alive also), and considered himself king from 1190 until his assassination in 1192. . . . We are perhaps justified, therefore, in assuming that, as early as the spring of 1201, his interest in obtaining the command of the crusader armies sprang from a determination to fight on Byzantine soil for what he considered a family fief"

Hohenstaufen Philip of Swabia.⁷ Innocent III was anxious to avoid German intervention in the crusade; the aspirations of Henry VI had not died with him, and the dream of a strong central European state composed of Germany and Italy was very much the aim of the present Hohenstaufen emperor, Henry VI's brother, Philip of Swabia. Philip's claims to interest in the Byzantine empire were acquired through his marriage to Irene (May 25, 1197), daughter of the deposed ruler Isaac Angelus, and sister to the young pretender to the Byzantine throne, Alexius. "Moreover," writes Edgar Holmes McNeal, "Philip had inherited from his late brother Henry the traditional enmity toward Byzantium which had expressed itself in Henry's great but abortive plan for an expedition against the Byzantines, a legacy to the Hohenstaufens from their Norman predecessors in Sicily."⁸ It was to Philip's court that Boniface retired after meeting with the French barons at Soissons, and there met Alexius. Boniface wintered at the court, and in the course of this prolonged meeting taking place during the winter of 1201-02, the subject of Alexius' Byzantine claims must have arisen. In any case, Alexius remained for the present time in the shadowy background.

Throughout the summer of 1202 bands of crusaders straggled into Venice, and by late summer, it became

⁷ Ibid., p. 166.

⁸ Loc. cit.

apparent that only about one-third of the estimated 33,500 crusaders were going to arrive at all. Many had made their own arrangements for travel and had decided to travel to Egypt independently of the movement. But even if these independent travelers had joined the bulk of the army, the forces would have numbered less than one-half the original estimate. Thus the crusaders were immediately beset with financial problems and were at the mercy of the Venetians. Isolated on the island of St. Nicholas with neither food nor drink, the crusaders were soon in a state of desperation. Collections were taken in an unsuccessful effort to pay the crusaders' debt to the Venetians, and it was at this point that the Venetian doge Enrico Dandolo made his calculated proposition. In return for their help in recapturing Zara, a rival littoral city, the Doge would allow the crusaders an extension on their payment. Despite the objections of many crusaders, the Doge's proposal was accepted, and by November 24, 1202, the Christian city of Zara had been taken. Shortly after, a major riot took place between the French and the Venetians, and many casualties occurred before peace was restored. For the unwarranted attack on the Christian city of Zara, all those taking part were excommunicated and it was not until later when envoys from the crusade reached the enraged Pope Innocent III and explained to him the two choices which had confronted the crusaders, co-operation with the

Venetians or dissolution of the crusade and forfeiture of money already paid, that he agreed to rescind the order of excommunication in regard to the crusaders; the Venetians remained excommunicated.

When spring came, the crusaders found themselves with neither adequate provisions nor with the financial means to procure what they needed. It was at this point that the Marquis of Montferrat played his trump card: the young pretender to the Byzantine throne, Alexius Angelus, son of the deposed ruler Isaac, who, as rightful heir, would furnish them good reason to go to Constantinople. "Everything," writes Ernle Bradford, authority on the Fourth Crusade, "now had fallen into place. Like a massive and complex jigsaw puzzle, the schemes and ambitions of a number of individuals had dovetailed so that an overall pattern lay revealed--the diversion of the Fourth Crusade to Constantinople."⁹

One of the fondest dreams of Pope Innocent III was the union of the Orthodox Church of the East and the Church of Rome, and it is not inconceivable that he gave tacit approval to the restoration of Alexius to the Byzantine throne, for Alexius had promised just such a union in return for his empire. In June of 1203 Innocent III wrote to Boniface, who had wisely absented himself from the attack

⁹ Ernle Bradford, The Great Betrayal (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1969), p. 66.

on Zara. He commanded Boniface to give the Doge an earlier papal message, notifying the Venetians of their excommunication because of their role in the attack on Zara; he also flatly forbade the attack on Constantinople. Innocent III had delayed too long however, for the fleet had sailed before the letter was written. To what degree the lateness of his action implied complicity or tacit approval has been the subject of much speculation. But it is not to be supposed that he encouraged the second siege of Constantinople, and the looting and pillage which followed. Indeed, when presented with the fait accompli, there was little he could do, except capitalize on the situation.¹⁰

There were then four scenes which were playing at the same time in the "wings" of the Fourth Crusade. First of all, there were the intrigues of the great barons, each attempting to cheat the other. Motives of personal revenge and greed dominated this scene.

In the second scene there were only two actors, Pope Innocent III, who wanted to reunite the Church of Rome and the Eastern Orthodox Church, and Alexius Angelus, who promised it to him.

The third scene was dominated by Enrico Dandolo and the Venetians. Their role in the deviation of the Fourth Crusade was very important and wholly mercenary. The

¹⁰ Brundage, The Crusades, A Documentary Survey, p. 209.

agreements forced on the crusaders were obviously intended to subjugate, financially at least, the crusading army to their wishes. The Venetians aligned themselves slyly, first with the Egyptians, then the crusaders, even with Alexis himself; they certainly did not pass up any opportunity for gain. Colin McEvedy severely condemns the role the Venetians played in the Fourth Crusade:

The villains of this piece were not the ignorant Crusaders, who blindly cut out the heart of the dying Empire, but the Venetians, whose sly manipulations contrived the final perversion of the enterprise. Having begun by making the Crusaders pay for their passage by taking for Venice the Dalmatian town of Zara (1202), they ended by seizing all the islands that lay on the trade routes they now monopolized. Eight centuries later the fourth Crusade probably retains its place as the greatest commercial coup of all time.¹¹

The fourth scene was composed of the great mass of crusaders who, ignorant of all these motives and intrigues, envisioned only the war against the Infidel, be they Egyptian, or be they schismatic Greeks, "pire que les juis," as Robert de Clari tells us. In his account, La Conquête de Constantinople, just such a viewpoint is found, for Robert de Clari was a soldier of the ranks, and his chronicle recounts the story of the crusade as he saw it.

¹¹ Colin McEvedy, ed., The Penguin Atlas of Medieval History (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1969), p. 68.

CHAPTER III

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Of the Fourth Crusade there remain four principle chronicles: a Russian pilgrim's work, The Chronicle of Anthony of Novgorod; the chronicle of a Byzantine Greek, Nicetas Chroniates;¹² and the two French chronicles, one the work of Geoffroy de Villehardouin, and the second, La Conquête de Constantinople, by Robert de Clari. It is the latter of these four chronicles which concerns us here, the Conquête de Constantinople of Robert de Clari, a poor knight and a simple soldier.

From its inception Villehardouin was associated with the leaders of the movement and, indeed, served as a member of its negotiations staff. In his chronicle, also entitled La Conquête de Constantinople, he perpetrates the "official version" of the events composing the Crusade; his work stands as an apologia of the deviation of the

¹² The Russian work exists in French and Latin translations, Le Livre du Pèlerin, Mme. B. de Khitrowo, trans., for the Société d'Orient Latin in Itinéraires russes, I (1889), 87-111. There is another translation into French by Marcelle Ehrard, Romania, LVIII (1932), 44-65. A Latin translation is found in Riant, Exuviae, II 218-30; a second Latin translation is found in Hopf, Chroniques gréco-romanes (Berlin, 1873), pp. 93-98. The Greek chronicle is found in Patrologia Graeca, CXXXIX, and also in an edition by Imm. Bekker, Corpus Scriptorum historiae Byzantinae (Bonn: Weber, 1835).

crusading armies from Egypt and the subsequent attack on the greatest Christian city of the East, Constantinople.¹³ On the other hand, Robert de Clari does not attempt through his chronicle to justify the actions of the leaders of the Crusade, nor those of his more intimate companions. He set himself the task of recounting "li estoires de chiaus qui conquissent Coustantinople."¹⁴ While Villehardouin wrote primarily of the great leaders of the Crusade, of what they did and why, it is a picture of the less illustrious but undoubtedly more sincere and pious members of the crusading army that Robert describes. Albert Pauphilet, one of the greatest contemporary authorities on the Middle Ages, admirably characterizes first Villehardouin, then Robert de Clari: "L'un aide mieux à la connaissance de quelques faits, l'autre à celle des hommes de son siècle."¹⁵

We have already considered the historical fact of the Fourth Crusade; let us now consider Robert de Clari

¹³ Albert Pauphilet, "Robert de Clari et Villehardouin," in Mélanges de Linguistique et de Littérature offerts à A. Jeanroy (Paris: Editions E. Droz, 1923), p. 559.

¹⁴ Robert de Clari, La Conquête de Constantinople, ed. Philippe Lauer (Paris: Classiques Français du Moyen Age, 1924), p. 1. This edition of the text prepared by Philippe Lauer for the CFMA Series is generally accepted as the definitive edition and will be the edition used throughout this study. Hereafter it will be cited simply as Lauer.

¹⁵ Albert Pauphilet, Le Legs du Moyen Age (Melun: Librairie d'Argences, 1950), p. 328.

and his chronicle, La Conquête de Constantinople. This work must not be accepted as an irrefutable source for the happenings it describes but, rather, must be appreciated as the testimony of one witness to the event.

Robert de Clari was a poor simple soldier and yet he composed a chronicle of the Fourth Crusade, in which he participated, which enables us to rejoin his comrades, the mass of the soldiery, at the moment when they were embarking to fight the Infidel, when they were embarking on a soon-aborted Christian crusade, a crusade betrayed from the beginning by its leaders.

The information concerning the life of Robert de Clari is contained primarily in his chronicle. There have been published however several scholarly articles dealing with his family origins. Alfred Rambaud, in an article for the Mémoires de l'Académie nationale des sciences, arts, et belles lettres de Caen in 1873 traces Robert's family to Clairi-Saulchois, a suburb of Amiens, where they operated a butcher shop. The problem is complicated, he states, because there were three other families named Clari in the same region of France, Clary-en-Flandre, Clery-sur-Somme, and Clery-en-Vexin, and each of the four families had, at this time, a head of the family surnamed Robert.¹⁶ G.

¹⁶ Alfred Rambaud, "Robert de Clari, Guerrier et Historien de la Quatrième Croisade," Mémoires de l'Académie nationale des sciences, arts, et belles lettres de Caen (1873), p. 118.

Boudon, in an article contained in the Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de Picardie in 1899, stoutly denies such origins and criticizes the article of Alfred Rambaud. "L'article de M. Rambaud," he writes, "est intéressant comme analyse de la chronique: au point de vue critique il n'a pas de valeur." He further states that those who would try to "transformer le chevalier Robert en un boucher démocrate ce sont des assertions qui dénotent un manque d'étude approfondie."¹⁷

It seems most likely that Robert de Clari is from Clery-les-Pernois (the canton of Domart-en-Ponthieu, the arrondissement of Doullens, Somme) located north of Vignacourt, between Flixecourt and Canaples.¹⁸ That Robert could indeed count himself a "povre chevalier" is apparent in understanding that the fief of Clery was of an area of "6 hectares 45 ares."¹⁹ He accompanied his brother Aleaume on the Fourth Crusade, fighting under the banner of his lord, Pierre d'Amiens. In the chronicle itself we are able to retrace his route to Constantinople and, in addition can speculate upon the date of his return to Picardy--1205. It appears that Robert did not participate in the events taking place between 1205 and 1216, which he

¹⁷ G. Boudon, "Documents Nouveaux sur la Famille de Robert de Clari," Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de Picardie (1899), p. 378.

¹⁸ Lauer, p. v.

¹⁹ Lauer, p. v.

describes in the third part of his chronicle. The style itself of this third part of the chronicle, brief and succinct--too brief and succinct--hypothesizes the physical absence of the author from the area where the events were occurring. According to Edgar Holmes McNeal, the most well known of the translators of this chronicle, this brevity of style is explained by one of two theories: either Robert dictated his entire chronicle in 1216, including events taking place after his departure, or he dictated the work immediately upon his return to Picardy in 1205 and added an epilogue in 1216.²⁰

A second source to support 1205 as the date of his return to Picardy is an inscription found on a crystal reliquary, preserved in Corbie:

Ce sachent tos cils qui ces lettres liront et croient fermement que ces saintes reliques, qui ci sont en cest vaissel enselées, furent apportées de Constantinople, et qu'ils furent prises en la Sainte Chapelle à Buche de Lyon el palais l'empereur, et que Robillard de Clari les apporta en cel tems que li cuens Baudeuvin de Flandre en fust empereur.²¹

Philippe Lauer, who edited the definitive edition of Robert de Clari's La Conquête de Constantinople, reports in the introduction to the work various theories as to the crusader's probable date of return:

²⁰ Robert de Clari, The Conquest of Constantinople, trans. Edgar Holmes McNeal (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1936), pp. 4-7.

²¹ Lauer, p. vi.

Selon Hopf, les renseignements fournis par Robert prouveraient qu'il n'était pas rentré en France avant les catastrophes de 1205 et 1207; Hirsch, dans son comte-rendu de l'édition de Hopf, va plus loin encore, et fait mourir Robert à Constantinople après 1216. Enfin Riant, a donné, pour l'arrivée à Corbie des reliques apportées par Robert des dates diverses: 1203, 1206, 1213, sans en justifier aucune.²²

He concludes also that Robert de Clari most probably returned to France shortly after April 14, 1205, date of the death of Baldwin I.

Given the framework of these three facts: that Robert de Clari was a poor knight of Picardy, that he fought in the Fourth Crusade under the banner of Pierre d'Amiens, and that he returned to his native Picardy, probably in 1205, to compose a chronicle of the events of the crusade, we can further delineate his portrait by what he himself reveals in his chronicle.

He mentions himself only twice in the work. In the epilogue where he attests to the authorship of the chronicle, he also explains his intention in composing the work:²³

Ores avés oï le verité, confaitement Coustantinoble fu
conquise, et confaitement li cuens de Flandres
Bauduins en fu empereres, et mesires Henris ses
freres après, qui chis qui i fu et qui le vit et qui
l'oï le tesmongne, ROBERS DE CLARI, li chevaliers,

²² Lauer, p. vii.

²³ Translations of the following passage, and of subsequent lengthy quotations from the chronicle will appear in the footnotes. Unless otherwise noted, the translations are my own.

et a fait metre en escrit le verité, si comme ele fut conquise; et ja soit chou que il ne l'ait si belement contee le conquiste, comme maint boin diteeur l'eussent contee, si en a il toutes eures le droite verité contee, et assés de verités en a teutes qu'il ne peut mie toutes ramembrer.²⁴ (Lauer, CXX)²⁵

Of his sincerity one can have no doubt; his good faith is evident even though, as we shall see, his chronology is not always accurate.

He names himself a second time, again indirectly, in the third person, when he describes the heroism of his brother, Aleaume de Clari, during the second attack on Constantinople. And even then, he speaks of himself in such a way as to increase the valor of another, his brother.

Quant Aliaumes li clers vit que nus n'i osoit entrer, si sali avant et dist qu'il i enterroit. Si avoit illuec un chevalier, un sien frere, Robers de Clari avoit a non, qui li desfendi et qui dist qu'il n'i enterroit mie; et li clers dist que si feroit, si se met ens a piés et a mains; et quant ses freres vit chou, si le prent par le pié, si commenche a sakier

²⁴ "Now you have heard the truth, of how Constanti-nople was conquered, and of how the Count of Flanders, Baldwin, was emperor of it, and my lord Henry his brother after, by one who was there and who saw it and who bears witness to it, Robert de Clari, the knight, and who put into writing the truth of how it was conquered, and though it be that he has not told so well of the conquest as many a good storyteller would have done it, he has the absolute truth of it told, so many of them are there that he could scarcely remember them all."

²⁵ Roman numerals refer to chapter divisions as established by Lauer; Arabic numerals will denote lines within a chapter.

a lui, et tant que, maugré sen frere, vausist ou ne dengnast, que li clers i entra. (Lauer, LXXVI, 1-9) ²⁶

Robert de Clari generally avoids in his chronicle the use of the first person; he does not project himself into roles he did not play. This technique of remaining in the background attests to his modesty, and, of greater significance, illustrates an effort to "donner à son récit une portée générale, donc de faire oeuvre d'historien."²⁷ Thus, in spite of his inaccuracies of date and place, he did strive toward a certain objectivity in his writing, which distinguishes him somewhat as an historian.

Also of importance in trying to establish what the writer himself must have been like are the events he chooses to describe. The same humble knight who was so impressed with the splendor and magnificence of the fleet as it put to sea is no less a wide-eyed tourist when confronted with the marvels of Constantinople. He is at his best when reporting a vivid battle scene, though at

²⁶ "When Aliaumes the clerk saw that no one dared enter there, he went forward and said he would go in there. There was present a knight, his brother; Robert de Clari was his name, who forbade it and who said he should not enter. The clerk said he certainly would do it and he got down on his hands and feet; and when his brother saw that, he seized him by the foot and began to pull him, so that in spite of his brother, whether he wished it or not, the clerk entered there."

²⁷ Albert Pauphilet, "Sur Robert de Clari," Romania, LVII, 290.

times he neglects major divisions of the army, or when he wanders the streets of Constantinople. Such are the scenes which would impress an unsophisticated soldier. It is through these little episodes, through all the details which are supremely human that he proves himself "bon diteeur" of the truth of "confaitement Coustantinople fu conquise . . . [par] chis qui i fu et qui le vit."

The original manuscript of Robert de Clari's chronicle, La Conquête de Constantinople, has not been discovered. The problem facing medieval scholars, of selecting one of several extant versions of a given text, has not been the case however with this work, for there is but one known manuscript, dating from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. It is recorded in two columns, written in the same hand, and occupies folios 100 to 128 of a volume which also contains "la chronique dit du Menestrel de Reims (folios 1-44); . . . le Roman de Troie de Jean de Flixecourt (f. 45-60); . . . la Chronique de Turpin (f. 61-78); . . . le Livre du Castiement et des Proverbes de Pierre Alphonse (f. 80-99).²⁸

This manuscript was written in Picardy, most probably in the great abbey there, where many preparations for the Fourth Crusade were made, and to which Robert de Clari

²⁸ Lauer, p. iii. See also Alfred Rambaud, "Robert de Clari, Guerrier et Historien de la IV^e Croisade," p. 116.

brought the holy relics taken from the palace of Boucoleon in Constantinople. The manuscript is now housed in the Royal Library of Copenhagen (manuscript 487).²⁹

²⁹Lauer, p. iii. See also Alfred Rambaud, "Robert de Clari, Guerrier et Historien de la IV^e Croisade," p. 117.

CHAPTER IV

SYNOPSIS

This chapter presents a schematic outline of Robert de Clari's chronicle, La Conquête de Constantinople. The contents have been outlined by letter and number, and each major heading indicates the number of chapters and lines Robert de Clari devotes to each topic, thus giving the reader an idea of proportions within the chronicle. The flavor of the original work has been maintained wherever possible by using phrases from the chronicle, and by closely adhering to the structure of the work. Footnotes have been provided throughout to identify persons or places, or to point out some of the major historical inaccuracies of the chronicle.

I. Prologue (1 chapter, 94 lines)

- A. Preaching of the crusade by "Foulkes de Nuelli"
- B. Taking of the cross--a partial listing, "car nous ne vous savons mie tous nommer." Observes hierarchy: count, bishop, abbot, baron, knight.

II. Preparations for the Crusade (10 chapters, 242 lines)

- A. Election of Thibaut de Champagne as leader; his death and that of Fulk of Neuilly.
- B. Reunion at Soissons, selection of Marquis of Montferrat³⁰ as leader.
- C. Messengers sent to Genoa, Pisa, and Venice to seek ships. Venice accepts. Financial terms discussed.³¹

³⁰ McNeal, trans., The Conquest of Constantinople, pp. 34-35, n. 13: ". . . This powerful family of Lombardy was connected by marriage both with the Capetians and with the Hohenstaufen, and its members had played important roles in the kingdom of Jerusalem and in the Byzantine empire. The father, William the Old, had gone on the Second Crusade and had spent some time in the Holy Land. Returning later, he was captured by Saladin in the fatal battle of Hattin in 1187, Boniface's oldest brother, William Longsword, married Sibylle of Jerusalem and was the father of Baldwin V. The next oldest brother was the famous Conrad of Montferrat. He married Isabelle of Jerusalem and was recognized as king in 1192, but was assassinated the same year. His exploits at Constantinople and at Tyre are narrated by Robert later on. A younger brother, Rainer, married a daughter of Emperor Manuel of Constantinople and perished in the palace revolution of 1183."

³¹ McNeal, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 38, n. 17: "The actual treaties between the doge of Venice on the one side and the envoys of the three counts of Champagne, Flanders, and Blois on the other are found in Tafel and Thomas (I, 362ff.). The terms were as follows: the service for a year of a fleet large enough to transport 4,500 knights and their horses, 9,000 squires, and 20,000 foot soldiers, together with their arms and armor and provisions. In addition, the doge promised fifty armed

- D. Pilgrims, assembled in Venice, forced to lodge on island of St. Nicholas.
- E. Selection of Venetians to accompany crusaders, fewer crusaders present than were expected; hence financial problems. Collection taken from crusaders. Insufficient funds. Doge³² quarantines crusaders on island and forbids them food and drink.
- F. Crusaders take second collection. Doge proposes to sail with them with the understanding that they share each conquest equally and that crusaders pay what they owe from their half of first conquest.

III. Zara Episode (4 chapters, 132 lines)

- A. Doge suggests capture of Zara; crusaders accept. Description of magnificence of fleet.
- B. Arrival at Zara. City under protection of Pope; excommunication threatened. Two barons defect to Hungary. Zara besieged, taken, divided.³³

galleys, also for a year's service. This year was to be reckoned from the next feast of SS. Peter and Paul (June 29), unless changed by common agreement. For this the crusaders were to pay 85,000 marks of pure silver of the weight of Cologne--15,000 by the first of the next August (1201), 10,000 more by the Feast of All Saints (November 1), 10,000 more by the Purification of the Blessed Virgin (February 20, 1202), and the remaining 50,000 by the end of April. The mark was a money of reckoning, equivalent, at least in the fourteenth century, to about 234 grams of silver, or about the silver of nine silver dollars. Purchasing power, of course, was many times that of the same weight of silver today. Villehardouin, one of the negotiators of the agreement, gives the correct terms . . ., but he does not mention any dispute about the price."

³² Ernle Bradford, in *The Great Betrayal* (p. 27), characterizes the Doge as follows: "Enrico Dandolo, that patrician with the morals of a merchant on the make, was one of the ablest politicians of his day."

³³ After five days of bitter fighting, the city was taken, and the inhabitants forced to take refuge in the nearby hills. Zara was sacked and looting was rampant. This unwarranted attack upon a Christian city was contrary to all principles which had from the beginning governed such Christian ventures.

- C. Quarrel between crusaders and Venetians. Peace re-established. All attackers excommunicated, send messengers to Rome for apostolic pardon. One, Robert de Bove, goes on to Egypt from Rome.³⁴
- D. Army winters in Zara. Supplies depleted.
- E. Doge suggests taking Greece, "molt rike tere et molt pentive de tous biens." Montferrat suggests Constantinople, having met with son of Isaac of Constantinople in Germany at Christmastime.

IV. FIRST MAJOR DIGRESSION: Narrative turns from crusaders to history of Byzantine emperors of Constantinople (11 chapters, 433 lines)

- A. Manuel I Comnenus proves French loyalty and Greek treachery.

³⁴ The effect of the excommunication upon the ordinary Crusaders was powerful. Ernle Bradford describes their reaction as follows: "He [the ordinary Crusaders] had left his home and family to take part in a 'sanctified' war against the heathen. Somehow or other he had been trapped into aiding the Venetians in a private act of warfare against a city belonging to the King of Hungary. Now he found that he was excommunicated, and he was still as far away as ever from the original object of his service. It was little wonder that relations between the ordinary soldiers and the Venetians became so bad as to end in open conflict. . . . Throughout the winter that the army passed encamped in and around Zara, it was hardly surprising that there were many defections from the army. Some made their way north overland back to their homes, others who had the price of their passage embarked in visiting merchant ships. 'Thus,' Villehardouin wrote, 'our forces dwindled from day to day.' . . . As one of the leaders of the Crusade, he needed to find every possible excuse for what occurred. It is hardly surprising, then, that one even finds him stigmatising as traitors the men who left the army after that gross violation of their Crusading oaths--the attack on Zara" (The Great Betrayal, p. 64).

- B. Son of Manuel I to marry sister of Philip of France (Agnes)³⁵
- C. Bride arrives, much festivity. Andronicus,³⁶ relative of Manuel, sent for Queen of Jerusalem, Theodora,³⁷ sister of Manuel. En route, he lies with her by force ("jut a lui a forche"); later gives her to Saracens.
- D. Manuel enraged; festivities continue.
- E. Death of Manuel; Andronicus pleads to return.
- F. Child emperor yields, makes Andronicus steward.
- G. Child emperor and mother murdered by Andronicus.
- H. Andronicus usurps throne.
- I. Three Angelus brothers oppose Andronicus. One blinded, becomes monk. Two flee, Isaac Angelus to Vlachia, his brother to Antioch where he is captured by the Saracens.
- J. Isaac returns to Constantinople poverty stricken. Hides, is discovered. Kills steward of Andronicus.
- K. Isaac proclaims triumph over tyranny, rallies populace. Takes refuge in Hagia Sophia. Populace calls upon patriarch to crown Isaac. Messengers take news to Andronicus.

³⁵ McNeal, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 48, n. 37: "The child emperor, Alexius II, 1180-83. He was married to Agnes, the daughter of Louis VII and Alix of Champagne and the own sister of Philip Augustus. She was then some ten or twelve years old. As empress she was given the Greek name Anna."

³⁶ McNeal, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 49, n. 38: "Andronicus Comnenus, grandson of Alexius I and cousin-german of Manuel; he was emperor, 1183-85"

³⁷ McNeal, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 49, n. 39: "This was Theodora, daughter of Isaac, an older brother of Manuel, therefore Manuel's niece and not his sister. She was the widow of Baldwin III, king of Jerusalem, who had died in 1162."

- L. Andronicus attempts assassination of Isaac in Hagia Sophia. Andronicus flees to palace. Steals away by sea.
 - M. Isaac taken to palace, placed on throne. Treasure of Blacherne divided.
 - N. Storm forces Andronicus to shore. Hides in wine cellar of local inn.
 - O. Andronicus discovered, captured. Methods of torture, death discussed.
 - P. Populace enjoys revenge. Death of Andronicus.
 - Q. Isaac seeks brother held by Saracens. Brother ransomed.
 - R. Brother (Alexius III Angelus) made chief steward.
 - S. Alexius betrays Isaac; blinds, imprisons him, siezes power.
 - T. Tutor sends Isaac's son to sister Irene and husband, Philip of Swabia.
 - U. Digression ends. Transitional passage.
- V. Progress to Corfu (4 1/5 chapters, 88 lines)
- A. Montferrat shows that Alexius offers "raisnavle accoison" (good excuse) for going to Constantinople.³⁸
 - B. Messengers summon Alexius from Germany.
 - C. Fleet sails to Corfu; Alexius joins crusaders there.
 - D. Alexius, crusaders discuss terms. Alexius to pay 200,000 marks; one year's maintenance of fleet; 10,000 soldiers maintained for life; one year's provisions.

³⁸ McNeal, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 45, n. 30: "Pope Innocent had warned the crusaders not to attack any Christian lands 'unless the inhabitants should wickedly oppose their march or some other just or necessary cause should arise . . . !'"

- E. Dispute among crusaders on deviation to Constantinople. Montferrat again urges voyage to Constantinople.

VI. SECOND MAJOR DIGRESSION: Grievances of Montferrat against Isaac Angelus (5 4/5 chapters, 232 lines)

- A. Conrad of Montferrat, brother of the Marquis of Montferrat, journeys to Constantinople, aids emperor to suppress civil revolt led by Vernas (Alexis Branas). Emperor betrays Conrad, locks gates of city against him. Conspires against Conrad, assassination planned. Conrad flees to Tyre in Syria.
- B. Digression within digression
 - 1. Death of King of Jerusalem; kingdom lost except Tyre and Ascalon.
 - 2. Sisters of king married to Guy of Lusignan and Hainfrois of Tournon. Nobles separate Guy from wife, older of two sisters,³⁹ that she choose a more suitable mate for king.
 - 3. Raymond II, Count of Tripoli, hopes to secure crown; goes away in disgust when she chooses her husband, Guy of Lusignan.
 - 4. Saladin wars against kingdom, captures king. Only Tyre and Ascalon remain. Saladin ransoms king in return for Ascalon. King surrenders Tyre, seeks refuge at Tyre
- C. Meanwhile, Conrad secures personal loyalty of Tyre. Inflation rampant. King arrives. Conrad refuses him entry. King journeys to Acre where he remains. Inflation in Tyre relieved.

³⁹ McNeal, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 62, n. 55: "These were half-sisters, daughters of Aymere I by his first and his second wife, respectively. The elder was Sibylle, whose first husband was William Longsword, son of William the Old of Montferrat, and brother of Conrad and Boniface. The offspring of this marriage was Baldwin V, who reigned only a year and who is not mentioned by Robert. The younger was Isabelle, later married to Conrad of Montferrat, as Robert tells."

- D. Saladin besieges Tyre, blockades city by land and sea. Inflation increases. A Genovese in city proposes tactics to defeat Saladin: decoy lures Saladin away, armed ships close in with pincer movement. Tactics succeed; Saladin defeated. Guy remains exiled in Acre, Conrad retains Tyre.
 - E. Death of Guy and wife. Her sister separated from husband, Hainfrois of Tournon, given to Conrad. A daughter born to them. Conrad slain by Assassins. Queen then given to Count Henry of Champagne.
 - F. End of Digression; transitional passage.
- VII. The Army before the walls of Constantinople (2 3/4 chapters, 70 lines)
- A. Boniface of Montferrat again urges journey to Constantinople, Alexius being "raisnavle accoison." Barons question clergy as to righteousness of voyage, clergy condone mission. Covenant between Alexius and crusaders. Fleet sails to Abydos, then through Arm of Saint-George⁴⁰ to Constantinople.
 - B. Citizens of Constantinople marvel at fleet. Army camps at Chalcedon. Emperor of Constantinople sends envoys, gifts, refuses to surrender city. Alexius placed on galley, paraded under walls of city. Citizens do not recognize Alexius as rightful heir.
- VIII. First Siege of Constantinople (10 3/4 chapters, 372 lines)

⁴⁰ McNeal, *The Conquest of Constantinople*, p. 66, n. 59: "Bras saint jorge. The Latin form is Brachium Sancti Georgii. This name was applied in the West to the Bosphorus at least from the time of the First Crusade. . . . Robert uses it . . . for the whole extent of the Straits from the opening of the Hellespont to the end of the Bosphorus. . . . The name seems to have been derived from the monastery of St. George of the Mangana, or Arsenal, which stands on the citadel of Constantinople, overlooking the Bosphorus."

- A. Crusaders arm, receive communion, make confession. Constantinople mounts defense. Venetians lead attack. Greeks retreat. Crusaders' ships to be placed in harbor protected by Golden Chain and guarded by tower of Galata.⁴¹ Tower besieged, taken. Ships moored.
- B. Strategy planned: Venetians to attack by sea, French by land. War engines mounted, battle preparations made. Deployment of troops. Simultaneous attack by land, sea. Confusion among land forces. Spirited crusader attack; emperor retreats, is chastized by citizens. Emperor flees in night. Citizenry seeks Alexius, son of Isaac.
- C. Alexius enters city in triumph; Isaac, wife freed. A convict, Murzuphlus, also freed, made chief steward.⁴²

IX. Developments in Constantinople: Treachery of Alexius
15 1/2 chapters, 491 lines)

- A. Sultan of Konia seeks aid of crusaders to regain lost kingdom; they refuse.

⁴¹ "Stretched between the tower and the city walls there ran an immense chain, operated by a windlass. When the chain was hauled up bar-taut, it hung a few feet above the surface of the sea--thus preventing any ship from entering the harbour. . . . The huge iron links, each the length of a forearm, had been made by the skilled iron-workers of the city. Technical skill indeed was needed to construct a chain with sufficient tensile strength to reach over 1,500 feet--the width of the harbour at this point--as well as to submit to the stresses and strains of being constantly raised and lowered" (Bradford, The Great Betrayal, p. 74). See also map of Constantinople, Appendix A.

⁴² "Alexis Ducas, nicknamed Murzuphlus, according to Nicetas, on account of the heavy eyebrows which grew together over the bridge of his nose He belonged to a leading family in Constantinople which had furnished two emperors: Constantine X, 1059-67, and Michael VII, 1071-78" (McNeal, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 78, n. 75).

- B. Crusaders inquire after sister of King of France. She receives them coldly and refuses to speak with them.
- C. King of Nubia,⁴³ pious Christian, relates adventures.
- D. Pierre of Bracheux remains in Constantinople with emperor. Rest return to camp. Free travel between city and camp.
- E. Barons demand payment of Alexius, who wishes first to be crowned. Alexius crowned, partial payment made.
- F. Alexius pleads poverty; crusaders agree to help him conquer more land. Conquest successful. Alexius continues to withhold payment. Alexius given two extensions of time. Murzuphlus proposes treachery; Alexius concurs and orders crusaders away. Interview between Alexius and Doge of Venice. Open declaration of hostility between Constantinople and crusaders.
- G. Skirmishes by sea between Greeks and French. Inflation mounts. Conspiracy of Murzuphlus against Alexius. Alexius and Isaac murdered.
- H. Murzuphlus proclaims self emperor; threatens crusaders, who vow to maintain siege, avenge Alexius.
- I. Preparations for battle mounted.
- J. Digression on John of Vlachia,⁴⁴ who offers aid to crusaders in return for his own kingdom in

⁴³ "... According to Jacques de Vitry, who learned about them while in the East on the Fifth Crusade, the Nubians were Jacobite Christians, that is, followers of the Monophysite heresy which attributed only one nature to Christ; they burn their children on the forehead with a hot iron in the form of a cross before they baptize them" (McNeal, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 80, n. 79).

⁴⁴ "The famous Joannissa, king of the Vlachs and Bulgarians. He called himself Calojohannes ("John the Fair" or "the Good") and is addressed by this title in the letters of Innocent III. Robert was misinformed about his origin. He was the youngest of three brothers who were

Vlachia. Brief history of John and Vlachia.
Sidelight on customs of Cumans and Comania.⁴⁵
Crusaders foolishly refuse. John crowned by
apostolic legate.⁴⁶

- K. Adventure of Henry of Flanders. On a scouting mission ambushed by Murzuphlus. Henry victorious, captures sacred icon. Icon paraded under city walls. Murzuphlus swears revenge.
- L. Crusaders plan procedure to select emperor should city be taken. Ten representatives each. Of patriarch and emperor, one to the French, one Venetian. Projected division of city. Restrictions on looting, molestation of citizenry.
- X. The Siege and Taking of Constantinople (13 chapters, 396 lines)
 - A. Preparation of war machines, arming of ships. First assault, pilgrims retreat.
 - B. Crusaders fear sin played major role in failure. Clergy assures battle was just. "Foles femmes" (prostitutes?) sent away.
 - C. Second assault mounted, attack on towers. Simultaneous attack by land under sea wall led by

either Bulgarians or Vlachs, and he had succeeded to the rule of these peoples when his two brothers were assassinated in 1196. It was his older brother, Assen, whom a Greek attendant struck with a whip" (McNeal, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 86, n. 85).

⁴⁵ "The Comans or Cumans were a tribe of Turkish origin, occupying at this time a large territory north of the Danube. They were in fact allies of Joannissa, who is said to have married a Coman wife" (McNeal, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 87, n. 86).

⁴⁶ "Innocent III had been trying to bring the Bulgarian church into the Latin communion. Papal letters dated February 25, 1204 (Potthast, Regista, I, nos. 2135 ff.) announce the sending of Cardinal Leo with a diadem and scepter, and with the authority to crown Joannissa and to confer the dignity of primate on Basil, archbishop of Trnovo." (McNeal, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 88, n. 87).

Pierre d'Amiens. Heroism of Aleaumes de Clari, brother of Robert de Clari. Sea wall penetrated, Greeks flee. City occupied. Murzuphlus flees, Lascaris named emperor; he flees immediately.

- D. Division of booty, immensity of wealth. Treachery of great nobles.

XI. Marvels of Constantinople (11 chapters, 299 lines)

- A. Palace of Boukoleon--five hundred rooms (apartments) of gold mosaic.
- B. "Sainte Capele"--much richness, silver, jasper, porphyry; many relics.
- C. Saint Sophia--healing properties of relics found within.
- D. Church of Seven Apostles.
- E. Golden Mantle--promise of prosperity.
- F. Golden Gate--victory gates.
- G. Games of the Emperor (Hippodrome)--statuary around walls.
- H. Two female statues in front of money exchange.
- I. Columns of Prophecy.
- J. Church of My Lady Saint Mary of Blachernae.
- K. Abbey where emperor Manuel buried. Slab on which Jesus' body lay; tears of Mary visible.

XII. Selection, Coronation and Conquests of Baldwin I (13 chapters, 333 lines)

- A. Twenty electors chosen according to plan; animosity apparent between faction supporting Baldwin and faction supporting Marquis de Montferrat.
- B. Palace placed under guard.
- C. Electors confined to church to deliberate. Baldwin, count of Flanders, selected.

- D. Coronation of Baldwin, Count of Flanders as Baldwin I, Emperor of Constantinople.
- E. Wealth (booty) divided.
- F. Marquis of Montferrat requests grant of land, Salonika (Ancient Thessalonica). Baldwin unable to comply, as land in question in possession of Venetians. Marquis enraged; marries widow of Isaac, sister to King of Hungary. Baldwin I departs Constantinople to conquer more land. Arrives at Salonika after numerous successful conquests.
- G. Montferrat and wife join conquering army, demand that Emperor Baldwin not attack his lands. Baldwin ignores order.
- H. Montferrat retreats, conquering lands Baldwin has just taken. Lays siege to Adrianople.
- I. Baldwin turns back to Constantinople, learns of Montferrat's treachery, plans attack. Montferrat panics, pleads protection from Doge and other knights in Constantinople. Promises restitution.
- J. Baldwin recognizes truce.
- K. Meanwhile those in Constantinople divide remaining treasures. Soldiers in the field enraged. Return to Constantinople. Much unrest.

XIII. Division of the Empire, Disaster at Adrianople
(9 chapters, 190 lines)

- A. Digression on Piere de Bracheux
 - 1. John the Vlach and the Comans impressed with Pierre of Bracheux
 - 2. Legend of Trojan origin of French.
- B. Constantinople itself and conquered lands divided.
- C. Thierry, brother of count of Loos, encounters Murzuphlus. Ex-emperor captured, put to death.

- D. Adrianople rebels. Host lays siege. John the Vlach and hordes of Cumans counterattack. French massacred. Emperor Baldwin lost, never found.
- E. Henry, brother of Count of Flanders, chosen emperor.

XIV. Conclusion (5 chapters, 72 lines)

- A. Montferrat slain in battle with the Cumans and John the Vlach.
- B. John the Vlach and Cumans attack Salonika. St. Demetrius strikes John the Vlach dead in his bed.
- C. Kingdom of Vlachia passes to John's nephew Boris, whose daughter⁴⁷ marries Henry, emperor of Constantinople.
- D. Emperor crowns son of Montferrat king of Salonika.
- E. Death of Henry.
- F. Epilogue--stresses truth rather than beauty of chronicle.

⁴⁷ McNeal, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 127, n. 133: "The Bulgarian princess whom Emperor Henry married as his second wife was in fact the cousin and not the daughter of Boris; she was the daughter of Joannissa."

CHAPTER V
MAJOR ELEMENTS OF LITERARY STYLE

In a discussion of elements of the literary style of Robert de Clari, it is necessary to understand the limitations imposed upon him by the state of development of the French language itself. Yet to acquire its full potential, in the early thirteenth century the French language was not so developed as to permit varied and effective use of sophisticated stylistic devices which were developed in conscious fashion in the modern French period. Such techniques were not an indigenous element in Robert de Clari's skill as a writer. However, he does utilize, sometimes in a rather rudimentary and contrived fashion, various stylistic devices to enhance his chronicle.

Dialogue, for example, is often employed to lend an aura of verisimilitude to his account, and often serves to emphasize, or put in relief, certain highlights of his narrative. The first use of direct discourse occurs when Boniface of Montferrat and the great barons meet at Soissons. They explain to him why they have sent for him, that the Count of Champagne, their leader, is dead, and they ask him to accept leadership of the crusade. This speech is presented in a form of direct discourse:

Et li baron furent consellié, se li disent: "Sire, nous vous avons mandé pour che que li cuens de Champaingne, nos sires, qui estoit nos maistres, est mors; et nous vous mandames pour le plus preudomme que nous saviemes, et qui le greigneur conseil pooit metre en nostre affaire, le voie Damedieu! Si vous proions tout pour Dieu que vous soiés nos sires, et que vous pour l'amour de Damedieu pregniés le crois." (Lauer, IV, 3-11)⁴⁸

Montferrat accepts their offer and with an irony too pointed to be intentional, Robert de Clari reports the following question, again as direct discourse:

Aprés quant li marchis fu croissiés, si dist as barons: "Seigneur," fist li marchis, "ou vaurrés vous passer, ne ne quel tere de Sarrasins vaurés vous aler?" (Lauer, V, 1-4)⁴⁹

Indeed, this is the whole point of the chronicle, and of the crusade itself, why it is the "estoires de chiaus qui conquisent Coustantinople" and not the "estoires de chiaus qui conquisent Babyloine ou Alexandre." Robert de Clari then returns to the less dramatic form of straight narrative which characterizes the greater part of his account.

The first meaningful use of dialogue coincides with the suggestion by the Doge of Venice that they pass by

⁴⁸ "And the barons took counsel and said to him, 'Lord, we sent for you because the Count of Champagne, our lord, who was our leader, is dead; we sent for you as the most worthy man that we know, and who could give us the best advice in our affairs, God willing. And we pray for God's sake that you be our lord, and that you take the cross.'"

⁴⁹ "Afterwards when the marquis had taken the cross he said to the barons, 'Lords,' said the marquis, 'where do you want to go, in what lands of the Saracens do you want to travel?'"

Greece, a "molt rike tere et molt plentive de tous biens"
because they have encountered serious financial difficulties.

The Marquis of Montferrat counter-proposes Constantinople:

Li dux de Venice vit bien que li pelerin n'estoient mie a aise; si parla a aus et si leur dist: "Seigneur, en Grece a molt rike tere et molt plentive de tous biens; se nous poïemes raisnavle acoïson d'aler y et de prendre viandes en le tere et autres coses, tant que nous fuïssiemes bien restoré, che me sanleroit boins consaus, et si porriemes bien outre mer aler." Adont se leva li marchis, si dist: "Seigneur, je fui antan au Noel en Alemaingne, a le court mon seigneur l'empereour. Illuesques si vi un vaslet qui estoit freres a le femme l'empereur d'Alemaingne. Chus vaslés si fu fix l'empereur Kyrsac de Coustantinoble, que uns siens freres li avoit tolu l'empire de Constantinoble par traïson. Qui chu vaslet porroit avoir," fist li marchis, "il porroit bien aler en le tere de Coustantinoble et prendre viandes et autres coses, car li vaslés en est drois oirs." (Lauer, XVII)⁵⁰

Robert de Clari also uses the dialogue form to add color and vividness to his story. His inventiveness is illustrated by the words he has the characters speak, which also reveal subtle portraits of the speakers. Just such a

⁵⁰ "The Doge of Venice saw well that the pilgrims were ill at ease and he spoke to them and said: 'Lords, in Greece there is a very rich land, plentiful in all goods; if we could have a good reason for going there and taking provisions and other things in the land until we were well restored, that would seem to me a good plan and we could well be able to go overseas.' And then the marquis got up and said, 'Lords, I was at Christmastime in Germany at the court of my lord the emperor. There was a young man who was the brother of the wife of the emperor of Germany. This young man was the son of the Emperor Isaac of Constantinople, whose brother had taken the empire from him by treason. Whoever could have,' said the marquis, 'this young man could go to Constantinople and take provisions and other things, for the young man is the rightful heir.'"

colorful and informative passage is found in Chapter LIX. The scene is an interview between Alexius, now restored to the throne and neglectful of the promises he made to the crusading army, and the irate Doge of Venice. The Doge has approached the city to urge Alexius to fulfill the terms of the agreement:

Alexe, que cuides tu faire?" fist li dux, "preng warde que nous t'avons geté de grant caitiveté, si t'avons fait seigneur et coroné a empereur; ne nous tenras tu mie" fist li dux, "nos convenenches, ne si n'en feras plus?"--"Naie," fist li empereres, "je n'en ferai plus que fait en ai"--"Non?" dist li dux, "garchons malvais; nous t'avons," fist li dux, "geté de le merde et en le merde te remeterons; et je te desfi et bien saches tu que je te pourcacherai mal a men pooir de ches pas en avant." (Lauer, LIX, 22-31)⁵¹

Just such an encounter would have been repeated around the campfire in the evening, and is the sort of happening which would have appealed to an unsophisticated soldier.

Robert de Clari does, as has been shown through previous examples, seem to be aware of the effectiveness of dialogue, whether real or imaginary. When developed, direct discourse sounds like natural speech; it has an element of realism, and includes slang ("Ba! ensi est ore!")

⁵¹ "'Alexius, what do you think you are doing?' said the Doge, 'note well that we took you from great adversity, and have made you emperor, will you no longer hold to your covenant with us?' said the Doge. 'No,' said the emperor, 'I will do no more than I have done!' 'No?' said the Doge, 'wretched boy, we dragged you out of the shit,' said the Doge, 'and into the shit we will cast you again. I defy you, and know well that from this day forth I will do you all harm in my power.'"

fist li empereres. "Or, de par Dieu!" dist li marchis. [Lauer, XXXIII, 83-84]) or such earthy language as the earlier cited dialogue between Alexius and the Doge. Otherwise, simple direct discourse prose, which could just have easily been rendered in narrative or indirect discourse detracts somewhat from the effectiveness of the use of direct discourse. An example of this sort of unnecessary use of direct discourse is found in Chapter XLI, lines 14-19. The chronicler has recounted the entire chapter in indirect discourse or narrative, and in the midst of this running account is the following single line of direct discourse:

"Seigneur, je loieroie bien que on presist dis galies et que on mesist le vaslet en une et gens avec lui, et qu'il alaissent par trives au rivage de Coustantinoble, et qu'il demandaissent a chiaus de le chité s'il vausissent le vaslet reconnoistre a seigneur."⁵²

He tends to use a dialogue form when relating events of some importance, such as the agreement between the Crusaders and Boniface, Marquis of Montferrat, the decision to journey to Constantinople to support Alexius' claims, or the violent interview between Alexius and the Doge of Venice, an episode which sealed the fate of Constantinople. He often uses the same dialogue form in vignettes which he includes to

⁵² "'Lords, I suggest that we take ten galleys and that we place the young man on one of them, and people with him, and that they go under truce to the shore of Constantinople, and that they ask those of the city if they would recognize the young man as their lord.'"

inform the reader of what has happened or to relate an occurrence which has impressed him somewhat. Just such an occurrence is the appearance of the King of Nubia at the Byzantine court:

Si comme li baron estoient laiens u palais, si vint ilhueques uns rois qui toute avoit le char noire, et avoit une crois en mi le front qui li avoit esté faite d'un caut fer. Chis rois si sejournoit en une molt rike abeïe en le chité, ou Alexes, qui avoit esté empereres, avoit kemandé que il fust et en fust sires et demisiaus, tant comme il i vausist sejourner. Quant li empereres le vit venir, si se leva encontre lui et s'en fist molt grant feste. Si demanda li empereres as barons: "Savés vous ore," fist il, "qui chist hons est?--Sire, nenil," fisent li baron. "Par foi!" fist li empereres, "ch'est li rois de Nubie, qui est venus en pelerinage en cheste vile." (Lauer, LIV, 3-15)⁵³

Sidelights such as these, sprinkled throughout the chronicle, form an interesting and integral part of the work. Though of lesser importance than the major events, Robert de Clari nevertheless makes an effort to render them entertaining and realistic. A major stylistic device he uses to this end is direct discourse. The effectiveness

⁵³ "Afterwards it happened that the barons were at the palace and there came there a king whose skin was all black, and who had a cross in the middle of his forehead which had been made with a hot iron. This king was staying in a very rich abbey in the city, where Alexius, who had been emperor, commanded that he be lodged, and of which he was to be lord and owner as long as he wanted to stay there. When the emperor saw him coming, he rose to greet him and made for him much festivity. And he asked the barons 'Now do you know,' he said, 'who this man is?' 'No, lord,' replied the barons. 'My word,' said the emperor, 'it is the King of Nubia, who has come on a pilgrimage to this city.'"

of direct discourse throughout the chronicle is enhanced by the fact that it is employed moderately, and usually with discrimination.

The bulk of the chronicle however is composed in narrative which is often of a one-dimensional nature. This sort of narrative is analogous to the camera in photography: just as a camera's eye records all details, regardless of their relative importance, the one-dimensional narrative style of Robert de Clari makes no distinction between an important or an unimportant detail. One of the best examples of this one-dimensional narrative, of a group of related actions joined by temporal and other connectives, is found in Chapter XLIII. This chapter deals with the siege and taking of the tower of Galata. The fast-moving action of this scene is reflected in the clipped, rapid-fire movement of the narrative, rhythmically interspersed with incessant connectives:

Quant li croisié et li Venecien virrent les Grius qui estoient venu seur le rivage tout armé encontr'aus, si parlerent ensanle tant que li dux de Venice dist qu'il iroit devant a toute se gent et qu'il prenderoit le rivage a l'aiwe de Dieu. Adont si prist ses nes et ses galies et ses uissiers, se se mist u front de l'ost par devant; après si prisent leur arbalestiers et leur arkiers, si les misent par devant en barges pour delivrer le rivage des Grius. Quant il se furent si faitement ordené, si alerent vers le rivage. Quant li Griu virrent que li pelerin ne lairoient mie pour peur d'aus qu'il ne venissent au rivage, et il les virrent aprochier d'aus, si se traisent arriere, onques ne les oserent atendre, tant que li estoires arriva, et quant il furent arrivé, si issirent li chevalier hors des uissiers tot monté; que li uissier estoient en tele

maniere fait que il i avoit wis que on ouvroit bien, si lanchoit on un pont hors, par ou li chevalier pooient issir hors a tere tot monté. Quant li estoires fu arivés, et li Griu, qui s'estoient trait arriere, virent que il furent tot issu hors, si en furent molt dolent. Or estoient che une gent, chil Griu qui estoient venu au rivage desfendre, qui s'estoient vanté a l'empereur que ja n'i arriveroient li pelerin tant comme il i fussent. Quant li chevalier furent issu hors des uissiers, si aquellent a cachier ches Grius, si les cachierent dusques a un pont qui pres estoit du kief de le chité; de seur chu pont avoit une porte ou par ent li Griu passerent et s'en fuirent en Constantinoble. Quant il furent revenu de cachier ches Grius, si parlerent ensanle, tant que li Venicien disent que leur vaissel n'estoient mie a seur, s'il n'estoient en port; si prisent conseil qu'il les meteroient en port. Or estoit li pors de Constantinoble molt bien fremés d'une molt grosse caaine de fer, qui tenoit en le chité et d'autre part du port tenoit a le tour de Galatha. Ichele tours estoit molt fors et molt bien desfensavle et molt bien warnie de gent desfensavle. (Lauer, XLIII)⁵⁴

⁵⁴ "When the crusaders and the Venetians saw that the Greeks were come to the shore all armed to meet them, they talked together until the doge of Venice said that he would go in advance with all his forces and seize the shore with the help of God. Then he took his ships and his galleys and his transports and put himself in front at the head of the host. Then they took their crossbowmen and their archers and put them in front on barges to clear the shore of the Greeks, and when they were drawn up in this way, they advanced toward the shore. When the Greeks saw that the pilgrims were not going to give up coming to the shore for fear of them, and saw them approaching, they fell back and did not dare wait for them. And so the fleet made the shore. As soon as they had made land, the knights issued forth from the transports on their horses; for the transports were made in such a way that there was a door that could be opened and a bridge thrust out by which the knights could come out on land all mounted. When the fleet had made land and the Greeks who had drawn back saw that they were all come out, they were greatly dismayed at it. Now these were the same people, these Greeks who had come to defend the shore, who had boasted to the emperor that the pilgrims should never land as long as they were there. When the knights were come forth from the transports, they began to give chase to these Greeks, and they chased them as far as a bridge which was near the head of the city. On this bridge there was a gate through which the Greeks

Though this one-dimensional narrative style is effectively used in the preceding passage, it is not always so skillfully employed. Indeed, instead of the rapid, rhythmical progression of the preceding paragraph, which is characterized by an element of suspense, Robert de Clari's use of the one-dimensional narrative often creates an impression of monotony, of a never-ending flow of equal ideas and facts, unaccented, with no modulation.

Quant Jehans fu venus, si commenche a atraire les haus homes de Blakie, comme chis qui estoit rikes hons et qui auques pooir i avoit, si leur commenche a prumetre et a douner et as uns et as autres, et fist tant que tout chil du pais furent tot sujet a lui, et tant que il fu sires d'aus. (Lauer, LXV, 1-6)⁵⁵

His style in the earlier citation is very similar to the list of names of those who went on the Crusade which is found in the prologue. It consists of a string of events joined together, all seemingly of equal proportions, with

passed in their flight to Constantinople. When the knights were returned from chasing these Greeks, they all talked together until the Venetians said that their vessels would not be in safety unless they were in the harbor, so they decided to put them in the harbor. Now the harbor of Constantinople was right well secured with a great iron chain which was fastened at one end in the city and at the other end, across the harbor, at the tower of Galata. This tower was very strong and defendable and was right well manned with defenders." Trans. by McNeal, The Conquest of Constantinople, pp. 68-69.

⁵⁵ When John had come, he began to attract the high men of Vlachia, as does one who is rich and has some power, and he began to make promises and to give, first to one and to the other, and did so that all those of the country were soon subject to him and so that he was lord over them.

no distinguishing characteristics to set one above or below the others. This unrelieved, relentless, monotonous, chain-of-events type of sequence reporting is characteristic of his purpose as an historian, to report all the facts, without embellishment. What he misses however is a sense of perspective; like the Byzantine mosaics in which the feet seem disproportionately large in relation to the head, which is further from the viewer, Robert de Clari records all facts in equal terms because they all seem the same to him. This lack of perspective is indicative of his position in the mass of Crusaders, unexposed to the momentous decisions which determined the destiny of the Crusade, living day by day according to the consequences of those decisions. This is, at the same time, the major weakness and the major strength of the chronicle as an historical source. Dorothy Sayers, an outstanding church historian and medieval scholar, writes: " . . . a historian ought to be precise in detail; but unless you take all the characters and circumstances concerned into account, you are reckoning without the facts. The proportions and relations of things are just as much facts as the things themselves; and if you get those wrong, you falsify the picture really seriously."⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Dorothy L. Sayers, Gaudy Night (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 21.

While it is true that Robert de Clari distorts proportions and relations of things, and that this is not acceptable for a purely historical source, it is acceptable, and even valuable in his chronicle, for by his distortions, we are able to see the effect of happenings and events upon him, what he thought about things around him, and what he did. The insight gained into the mind of one soldier of the ranks is, in this instance, worth the sacrifice of pure historical accuracy.

One of the most interesting and effective stylistic devices employed by Robert de Clari is the digression. There are two major digressions found in the work, and both serve to inform the reader of past events not directly related to the Crusade itself, but which offer background material and situate or clarify events which the chronicler later relates. That he feels the necessity to inform his reader of past happenings which bear on contemporary events attests to his efforts as an historian; that the information he offers is sometimes erroneous does not detract from his well-intentioned effort.

In the first major digression, Robert de Clari traces the Byzantine emperors from Manuel Comnenus to the usurpation of the Byzantine throne by Alexius III, Angelus, brother of Isaac. The digression occupies fourteen pages of the chronicle (342 lines), a relatively long segment of

the total work. The second major digression relates the grudges the Marquis of Montferrat and his brother Conrad bear against the Byzantines, in an effort to explain why the marquis urges more strongly than the other great leaders the deviation of the crusading forces to Constantinople. This digression is shorter, occupying only seven pages (225 lines).

Each of the two digressions is centered around the mention of Constantinople, and is so placed in the general flow of the narrative as to form an integral part of the total work. Each is effectively situated in the text and represents a natural elaboration upon some aspect of the events taking place which Robert de Clari feels requires further explanation or in-depth study. In the first case, the Doge of Venice has suggested that the crusaders journey to Greece to take provisions and to fortify themselves for the voyage to Egypt. Then Montferrat, having met the young pretender to the Byzantine throne, proposes that they travel to Constantinople, since the support of the rightful heir will furnish them a good reason to deviate the crusade to Constantinople:

"Seigneur, je fui antan au Noel en Alemaingne, a le court mon seigneur l'empereour. Illueques si vi un vaslet qui estoit freres a le femme l'empereur d'Alemaingne. Chus vaslés si fu fix l'empereur Kyrsac de Coustantinoble, que uns siens freres li avoit tolu l'empire de Constantinoble par traïson. Qui chu vaslet porroit avoir," fist li marchis, "il

porroit bien aler en le tere de Constantinoble et
prendre viandes et autres coses, car li vaslés en est
drois oirs." (Lauer, XVII, 9-18)⁵⁷

Robert de Clari wastes no time on preliminaries, but rather, in a very succinct phrase announces that he is taking leave of the pilgrims to tell the reader of Isaac and his son, and of those who came before:

Or vous lairons chi ester des pelerins et de l'estoire,
si vous dirons de chu vaslet et de l'empereur Kyrsaac,
sen pere, comment il vinrent avant. Il eu un empereur
en Coustantinoble, Manuaus eut a non
(Lauer, XVIII, 1-5)⁵⁸

In a similar manner he concludes the first digression; though succinct, the termination is nevertheless syntactically complex, and differs in this respect from the general composition of the chronicle. In the following passage for example, which is composed of only one sentence, he moves from a temporal connective ("quant") to several simple conjunctive connectives ("que," "et que," "si," "si," "si," "qui") to a causative connective ("car").

⁵⁷ "Lords, I was in Germany at Christmastime, at the court of my lord the emperor. There I saw a young man who is brother to the wife of the emperor of Germany. This young man is the son of the Emperor Isaac of Constantinople, whose brother had taken the empire of Constantinople from him by treason. Whoever had this young man,' said the marquis, 'could easily go to the land of Constantinople and take meat and other things, for the young man is the rightful heir of it.'"

⁵⁸ "Now we will take leave of the pilgrims and the fleet, and will tell you of this young man and of the emperor Isaac, his father, and of those who came before. There was an emperor of Constantinople, Manuel was his name"

Quant li maistres au fil l'empereur Kyrsac vit que li oncles a l'enfant eut traï sen pere, et qu'il s'estoit fais empereres par traïson, si ne fait mais el, si prent il l'enfant, si le fait mener en Alemaingne a se sereur, qui estoit femme l'empereur d'Alemaingne, car il ne voloit mie que ses oncles ne le fesist destruire, et estoit plus droïs oirs que Alexes ses oncles n'estoit. (Lauer, XXVIII, 9-16)⁵⁹

He does however include a transitional chapter, a sort of standard topos of the form "now you have heard . . ."

(Or avés oï . . .) and "now we will tell you . . ."

(Or vous dirons . . .), and that is just what he does.

The second major digression is also triggered by a mention of Constantinople, in circumstances very similar to those which introduce the first digression. The young Alexius, pretender to the Byzantine throne, has joined the Crusaders at Corfu and presents to them certain terms which he will fulfill if they will restore him to the throne. The crusaders are divided in their opinion of the deviation, some supporting the errant deed, others maintaining the necessity of going to Egypt. Montferrat urges the crusaders to travel to Constantinople, for reasons Robert de Clari explains are not wholly political or religious, but are of a vengeful nature.

⁵⁹ "When the tutor of the son of the emperor Isaac saw that the uncle of the child had betrayed his father, and that he had made himself emperor by treason, he did nothing else but take the child and have him sent to his sister, who was wife of the emperor of Germany, as he did not want the uncle to have him destroyed, for he was a more rightful heir than his uncle Alexius was."

Et li marchis de Monferras y metoit plus paine que nus
qui y fust d'aler en Coustantinoble, pour che qu'il
se voloit vengier d'un mesfait que li empereres de
Coustantinoble, qui l'empire tenoit, li avoit fait.
(Lauer, XXXIII, 20-24) ⁶⁰

The chronicler also alerts the reader that he is departing
from the present events of his narrative to furnish back-
ground material for the vengeful motives of the marquis
of Montferrat:

Or vous lairons ichi ester de l'estore; si vous dirons
le mesfait dont li marchis haoit l'empereur de Coustan-
tinoble. Il avint que li marchis Caurras, ses freres,
fu croisiés et qu'il ala outre mer . . . (Lauer,
XXXIII, 24-28) ⁶¹

And he again closes the digression with a standard topos
parallel to the ending of the first digression: "now we
have told you . . ." (Or vous avons conté . . .) and "let
us return to the matter at hand . . ." (Si revenrons
après a no matere de devant).

In addition to the two major digressions, there is one
of lesser proportions found in Chapters LXIV and LXV
(76 lines). This sidelight relates the story of John of
Vlachia and the hordes of Cumans, from what is present day
Romania. Robert de Clari introduces this nomadic people

⁶⁰ "And the Marquis of Montferrat gave more encourage-
ment than anyone else who was there to go to Constantinople,
because he wanted to take revenge for a misdeed that the
emperor of Constantinople, who controlled the empire, had
done to him."

⁶¹ "Now we will leave lie the fleet and will tell
you of the misdeed for which the marquis hated the emperor
of Constantinople. It happened that the Marquis Conrad, his
brother, took the cross and went overseas . . ."

and their leader in a perfectly natural manner, so that, except for the difference in time, the material he includes in the digression is indistinguishable from the rest of the text. By far the most colorful of any of his digressions, or episodic sidelights, this tale of John the Vlach and his band of savage raiders would have been just the sort of story a soldier might have heard around the campfire at night, and was certainly the type of adventure which would have captured his attention. Robert de Clari recounts that John the Vlach had requested that the crusaders crown him lord in his lands of Vlachia. In return for this small, and indeed, insignificant service, John, with fifty thousand men, would agree to aid the crusaders in taking Constantinople. In one of the few instances in the entire work, Robert de Clari makes a retrospective judgment in regard to the crusaders' decision:

Quant li baron de l'ost seurent chou que Jehans li Blakis leur mandoit, si disent qu'il s'en conselleroint; et quant il se furent consellié, si eurent malvais conseil, si respondirent que ne de lui ne de s'aiwe n'avoient il cure, mais bien seust il que il le greveroient et que il mal li feroient s'il pooient, et il leur vendi puis molt kier. Chu fu molt grand deus et molt grans damages. (Lauer, LXV, 42-49)⁶²

⁶²"When the barons of the army learned what John the Vlach asked of them, they said they would take counsel; and when they had taken counsel (and it was a bad counsel), they replied that from them he would have no help, but that he know well that they would grieve him and do him all the harm they could, and this decision cost them dearly. It was truly a shame and sorrow."

It was indeed, as he surmised, "malvais conseil" for it was this same John of Vlachia who so savagely took his revenge under the walls of Adrianople, slaying the armies of the Emperor Baldwin I, who were besieging the city. Baldwin himself was lost, never to be found; his brother Henry succeeded him on the throne.

There are found in the chronicle a number of lost details, mention of people who appear once, are absented from the scene of action, and simply never are mentioned again. In Chapter XIV for example, Robert de Clari reports that two knights, Symons de Monfort and Engerrans de Bove refuse to aid in the attack on Zara:

Chil disent qu'il n'iroient mie contre le commandement l'apostoile, ne qu'il ne voloient mie estre eskemenié, si s'atornerent, si alerent en Honguerie sejourner tot l'iver. (Lauer, XIV, 30-33)⁶³

Whether they ever return from Hungary is not reported. Another knight, Robert de Bove, is sent to Rome with the Bishop of Soissons to secure apostolic pardon for the excommunicated crusaders at Zara. Instead of rejoining the crusading army, Robert de Bove goes on to Egypt from Rome, where it may be assumed he waited in vain on the Egyptian shore for news of the crusaders, who were meanwhile attacking Constantinople.

⁶³ "These said that they would not go against the commandment of the pope, because they did not wish to be excommunicated; they turned away and went to Hungary to sojourn the entire winter."

These little facts, of no great historical value, provide nevertheless precious glimpses of human frailty or strength, of people and places. They also add color and humor to the chronicle. One cannot help but laugh at the nonchalance with which Robert de Clari reports the accidental discovery of Murzuphlus, the traitor:

Tant qu'il avint un jour que mesires Tierris, li freres le conte de Los, aloit veir se tere; si comme il en aloit, si encontra par aventure un jor Morchofle le traiteur, a un destroit, qu s'en aloit ne sai ou. (Lauer, CVIII, 1-5)⁶⁴

The appearance of the King of Nubia offers occasion for a descriptive and amusing account of the barons' reaction to this rather unusual sight:

Si comme li baron estoient laiens u palais, si vint illueques uns rois qui toute avoit le char noire, et avoit une crois en mi le front qui li avoit esté faite d'un caut fer, . . . Si demanda li empereres as barons: "Savés vous ore," fist il, "Qui chist hons est?"--"Sire, nennil," fisent li baron. "Par foi!" fist li empereres, "Ch'est li rois de Nubie, qui est venus en pelerinage en cheste ville" . . . Si esgarderent li baron chu roi a molt grant merveille. (Lauer, LIV, 3-32)⁶⁵

⁶⁴ "So that it happened one day that my lord Thierry, the brother of the count of Loos, was going to inspect his lands. While he was going there, he met by chance one day Murzuphlus the traitor on the road, going I know not where."

⁶⁵ "Afterwards it happened that the barons were at the palace and there came there a king whose skin was all black, and who had a cross in the middle of his forehead which had been made with a hot iron. And the emperor asked the barons: 'Now do you know,' he said, 'who this man is?' 'No lord,' they replied. 'My word!' said the emperor, 'it is the King of Nubia who has come on a pilgrimage to this city.' And the barons looked upon this king with great astonishment."

This sort of informative, vivid episode also relieves somewhat the tedious reporting of facts; lost details, such as the journey of Robert de Bove to Egypt, or the defection of Symons de Monfort and Enguerrans de Bove to Hungary, must have been significant. There are, then, digressions of considerable length, episodic sidelights, and interesting but often insignificant paragraphs relating details of persons of whom sight is then lost. The first two, at least, are skillfully employed and strategically placed in the chronicle so as to form a cohesive part of the work. The major function these techniques serve is to modify or clarify some fact or event previously mentioned. Little fait divers have this same sort of quality, and in addition, add color and life to the work.

In previous sections of this chapter Robert de Clari's use of certain stylistic devices has been discussed. With varying degrees of effectiveness he employs dialogue and narrative, and skillfully utilizes major and minor digressions, even isolated faits divers, to impart clarity, realism, and vivacity to his account. But to an extent, these devices are also employed in a very descriptive fashion. How colorful for example is the Doge's speech to Alexius: "' . . . garchons malvais, nous t'avons,' fist li dux, 'geté de le merde et en le merde te remeterons;" (Lauer, LIX, 28-29). Or the righteous indignation of the

Crusaders when commanded by Murzuphlus to leave his territory at once: "'Qui?' fisent il, 'chis qui sen seigneur a mordri par nuit en traïson si nous a mandé chou?'" (Lauer, LXII, 26-27).

The account of the taking of the tower of Galata is reported in a narrative style which effectively utilizes connectives to insist upon the rapidity of the events occurring.⁶⁶ This narrative passage has then a certain descriptive quality which is not maintained throughout the work. Indeed, in general, Robert de Clari's narrative style in reporting a series of events is non-descriptive.

But occasionally, most usually in recording episodic occurrences, the appearance of the King of Nubia, for example, or the chapters dealing with the Cumans and John the Vlach, Robert de Clari's account becomes richer and more varied. For this reason the episodes tend to stand out, patches of vivid color set in a monochromatic background.

His descriptive powers fail him however when he attempts to render the extreme, whether it be a question of size or beauty. Indeed, he seems incapable of grasping and conveying the number or quality of whatever he is describing. In the prologue Robert de Clari lists a number of nobles who participated in the Fourth Crusade, but as the Crusaders were too numerous to mention all by name, he

⁶⁶ See quotation p. 45.

writes, "nous ne vous savons mie tous nommer," a superlative he repeats four times in the space of eighteen lines. This same sort of topos is also used in describing the marvels of Constantinople, which almost overwhelm the unsophisticated knight from Picardy. He seems to realize his own inability to describe adequately the wondrous sights before his eyes. They all seem to be "si rikes et si nobles que on ne le vous saroit mie descrire ne aconter le grant nobleche ne le grant riqueche de chu palais" (Lauer, LXXXIII, 35-38), or so numerous that "on ne saroit mie nombrer le grant tresor d'or et d'argent que on trova es palais" (Lauer, LXXXIII, 43-35), or of such value that "on ne peust mie nombrer l'avoir que il valoit" (Lauer, LXXXV, 24-25).

The total wealth of the city itself presents a staggering vision to the chronicler, so far does it surpass anything he has ever seen, or anything he could ever imagine. Of this mass of wealth he writes:

Si comme li avoires fu la aportés, qui si estoit rikes et tant i avoit de rike vaissselemente d'or et d'argent et de dras a or et tant de rikes joiaus qui ch'estoit une fine merveille du grant avoir qui luekes fu aportés, mais puis qui chis siecles fu estorés, si grans avoires, ne si nobles, ni si rikes, ne fu veus, ne conquis, ne au tans Alixandre, ni au tans Charlemaine, ne devant ne après; ne je ne quit mie, au mien ensient, que es quarante plus rikes chités du monde eust tant d'avoir comme on trouva u cors de Constantinople. (Lauer, LXXXI, 6-16)⁶⁷

⁶⁷ The wealth was brought there, which was very rich, and so much were there of rich vessels of gold and silver and cloth of gold and so many precious stones that it was a

Of the soldiers and the fleet there are few descriptive passages in which the reader is invited to visualize men or machines. One such description, in which sound and light play a major role, is the picture Robert de Clari portrays of the joy and celebration of the soldiers when an agreement is finally reached between the Crusaders and the Venetians, enabling them at last to set sail:

Si fisent si grant goie le nuit qu'il n'i eut si povre qui ne fesist grant luminaire, et portoient en son les lanches grans torkes de candeilles entor leur loges et par dedans, que che sanloit que tote l'os fust esprise. (Lauer, XII, 34-38)⁶⁸

The most detailed description of the fleet is found, quite ironically, as the ships sail not into Constantinople, but into the port of Zara, the first Christian city attacked and razed by the crusading army.

Et cascuns des haus homes avoit se nef a lui et a se gent et sen uissier a ses chevax mener, et li dux de Venice avoit avec lui chinquante galies tout a sen coust. Le galie ou ens il estoit ert toute vermeille, et si avoit un pavellon tendu par deseure lui d'un vermeil samit; si avoit quatre buisines d'argent devant lui qui buisinoient et tymbres qui grant goie demenoient. Et tout li haut homme, et clerc et lai et petit et grant, demenerent si grant goie a l'esmovoir que

wondrous great booty which was carried there. And ever since the world was established, such a great treasure or so rich or so noble has never been seen nor conquered, not in the time of Alexander or Charlemagne, not before or after; and I do not think to my knowledge that in the forty most wealthy cities of the world there be so much treasure as was found at the Court of Constantinople."

⁶⁸ "That night there was such great joy that there was not one so poor as to not make a great light; and they carried large candles like torches on the ends of their lances around their lodges and inside, so that it seemed that all the army was ablaze."

onques encore si faite goie ne si fais estoires ne fu
veus ne oïs . . . que ch'estoit le plus bele cose a
eswarder qui fust tres le commencement du monde . . .
que ch'estoit une fine merveille. (Lauer, XIII,
 18-40)⁶⁹

The quality of Robert de Clari's vocabulary in describing this scene is expressive and detailed. For the first time, the reader is invited to visualize the scene before him. There are adjectives of quantity ("chinquante galies"), and spatial descriptions ("pavillon tendu"). Color ("vermeille," "argent," "vermeil") and sound ("buisines d'argent devant lui qui buisinoient") are brought into interplay. Robert de Clari ends the passage with two of his typical superlatives ("si faite goie ne si fait estoires ne fu veus ne oïs, . . . le plus bele cose a eswarder qui fust tres le commencement du monde . . ."). It was, as he concludes, "une fine merveille."

Compare the preceding passage to the less eloquent description of the fleet sailing into port at Constantinople:

Quant tous li estores et tout li vaissel furent tout
 ensanle, si achesmerent et atornerent leur vaissiaus si

⁶⁹ "And each of the great men had his own ship for himself and his people and a horse ship to transport his horses, and the Doge of Venice had with him fifty galleys at his own expense. The galley he was in was all vermillion and it had a canopy of vermillion samite over the Doge, and there were four silver trumpets before him which trumpeted and drums which sounded a great joy. And all the great barons and the clerks and laymen, the great and small, showed such a great joy at the departure that never since was such joy nor such a fleet ever seen or heard . . . it was the most beautiful thing to look upon since the beginning of the world . . . it was a wondrous sight."

belement que ch'estoit le plus bele cose du monde a eswarder. (Lauer, XL, 12-15)⁷⁰

Though elliptical in this description of the fleet, the chronicler does note however the reaction of witnesses on the walls of Constantinople:

Quant chil de Constantinople virrent chel estoire qui si estoit belement appareillies, si l'eswarderent a merveille, et estoient monte seur les murs et seur les maisons pour eswarder chele merveille; (Lauer, XL, 15-20)⁷¹

Of the three major types of description found in the chronicle, battle description, description of classes or groups of people, and description of tourist attractions registered in an unsophisticated way, it is in the first, battle description, that Robert de Clari excels. He feels compelled, for example, to describe in great detail the siege engines which were used to aid in the capture of Constantinople. Though the dimensions he ascribes to the various engines of war are in all probability inaccurate, his attention to detail and the actual construction of the machines is quite precise. The vocabulary used to describe the machines is technical, and the units of measure he employs in estimating the size of the siege engines are those which were commonly used for this purpose. Note for

⁷⁰ "When the navy and all the ships had come together, arrayed and adorned their vessels so beautifully that it was the most beautiful thing in the world to behold."

⁷¹ "When those of Constantinople saw this fleet which was so beautifully adorned, they marveled at it, and they climbed on the walls and on the houses to look at this marvel."

example such terms as "antaines," "les voiles des nes," "mas," "costes d'esclavannes," "quarriaux d'arbalestes," "saletes," and "mangonnell." For measure, note "trente toises," "trois chevalier armé i pooient aler de front," and "quarante toises."

Adont fist li dux de Venice molt merveillex engiens faire et molt biaux, car il fist prendre les antaines qui portent les voiles des nes, qui bien avoient trente toises⁷² de lonc ou plus; si les fist tres bien loier et atakier a boines cordes as mas, et fist faire bons pons par deseure et bons puis encoste de corder; si estoit li pons si les que trois chevalier armé i pooient aler de front. Et fist li dux les pons si bien warnir et couvrir as costés d'esclavannes et de toile que cil qui i montassent pour assalir n'eussent warde ne de quarriaux d'arbalestes ne de saletes; et lanchoit li pons tant avant outre le nef qu'il avoit bien de hauteur du pont dusques a tere pres de quarante toises ou plus; et a cascun des uissiers avoit un mangonnell qui getoient ades as murs et en le vile. (Lauer, XLIV, 27-42)⁷³

⁷² McNeal, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 70, n. 66: "Venetian and other Italian ships of this time were lateen rigged; that is, the sails were carried by very long spars or yardarms placed diagonally to the masts." P. 70, n. 67: "The medieval toise was about equivalent to the fathom, or six feet. If Robert is using the term in this sense, his figures are very inaccurate, here as well as elsewhere. Thus his thirty toises would make a spar 180 feet long, while the letter of Hugh of St. Pol says they were 100 feet. Later he estimates the two columns of Constantinople as 50 toises or 300 feet high, which is about twice the actual height."

⁷³ "Then the doge of Venice had marvelous engines made and very fine, for he had them take the spars which carry the sails of the ships, and which were fully thirty toises long or more, and he had them well tied and made fast to the masts with strong ropes, and he had them make good bridges of planks on them and good stakes alongside the ropes. And the bridges were so wide that three knights in armour could go side by side. And the doge had the bridges well protected and covered with hides and canvas on

But of all his battle descriptions, the most detailed is the attention he gives to the deployment of troops for the first siege of Constantinople. The battle, including the necessary arming and the putting to sea of those who were to attack from the shore side of the city, rages over ten pages of the chronicle, and occupies 323 lines. And so, armed, they "si fisent sonner buisines d'argent et d'arain bien dusques a chent paire, et tabours et tymbres tant que trop" (Lauer, XLI, 39-41). So numerous were they that "si leur fu bien avis que toute le mers et le tere tranlast, et que toute le mers fust couverte de nes" (Lauer, XLII, 5-7). The siege engines were mounted, as previously noted, with a very technical account of the construction of the machines. And then, Robert de Clari lists the various battalions, their order in the attack, and their commanders. This section of narrative is similar to the technique employed in the chanson de geste, of naming and placing in order the various battalions. Also reminiscent of the chanson de geste is the manner in which the chronicler reports the battle: he alternates between the attack of the Venetians by sea and the

the sides, so that those who mounted to the assault need have no fear of the quarrels of crossbows or of arrows. And the bridges extended so far out beyond the ships that the height from bridge to the ground was forty toises or more. And on each of the transports there was a mangonnel which could cast as far as the walls and into the city." Trans. by McNeal, The Conquest of Constantinople, pp. 70-71.

simultaneous attack of the Crusaders on the land side. The battle ends in a stalemate, for during the night the emperor flees, and without further opposition, the Crusaders enter the city, where Alexius and his father are placed on the imperial throne.

Robert de Clari's account of this first siege of Constantinople is vivid and supremely human. He is a soldier and as such is very impressed with the intricate war engines brought by the Venetians and with those aspects of military tactics which he witnessed. But his account is also indicative of a more personal, less formal aspect of the battle. In describing the "troops" guarding the camp and their efficiency he writes:

Et après prist on tous les garchons qui les chevax gardoient, et tous les cuisiniers qui armes peurent porter; si les fist on trestous armer et de keutes pointes et de peniax et de pos de coivre et de piletes et de pestiax, si k'il estoient si lait et si hideus que le menue gent a pié l'empereur, que estoient par dehors les murs, en eurent grant peur et grant hisde, quant il les virent. (Lauer, XLV, 18-25)⁷⁴

Indeed, what a motley crew they must have been! Like a true soldier, Robert de Clari is impressed by courage and prowess in battle, and disdains cowardice and ineptitude. The Count of Flanders commanded the honored vanguard

⁷⁴ "And afterwards they gathered all the boys who tended the horses and all the cooks who could bear arms, and they were all armed with quilts and saddle cloths and copper pots and maces and pestles, and they were so ugly and so hideous that the foot soldiers of the emperor who were under the walls, had great fear and trepidation when they saw them."

battalion, and he rode to the distance of two bowshots from the Byzantine camp. When he realized he was not advantageously placed for battle and that reinforcements could not readily join him, he withdrew. It is with obvious pride that Robert de Clari relates the decisive action taken by his lord, Pierre d'Amiens and the Count of St. Pol:

Quant le bataille le conte de Saint Pol et monseigneur Pierron d'Amiens virent le conte de Flandres retourner, si disent tot ensamble que li cuens de Flandres faisoit grant honte qui retornoit, qui l'avangarde avoit . . . et tout chil de l'ost qui estoient demoré arriere, commenchièrent a crier après: Veés, veés! Li quens de Saint Pol et mesires Pierres d'Amiens veut assanler a l'empereur. Sire Diex! . . . Sire Diex, soiés hui warde d'aus et de toute leur compaignie!" (Lauer, XLVII, 39-68)⁷⁵

Personal courage and valor are highly prized commodities. For Robert de Clari, there is none so brave nor so daring as his brother Aleaumes. If his account were accepted as the most accurate of sources, it would be Aleaumes de Clari who virtually single-handed captured Constantinople during the second siege of that city. Despite attempts by Robert de Clari to restrain his brother (he holds Aleaumes by the foot), Aleaumes succeeds in penetrating the walls

⁷⁵ "When the battalion of the count of Saint Pol and my lord Pierre d'Amiens saw the Count of Flanders returning, they said together that the Count of Flanders did a shameful thing in returning because he had the vanguard . . . and all those of the army who had stayed behind began to cry, 'Look! look! The Count of St. Pol and my lord Pierre d'Amiens are going to attack the emperor. Lord God! . . . Lord God, take care of them and all of their company.'"

of the city. His bravery once inside the city is unparalleled:

Quant il fu ens, se li keurent sus tant de ches Grius
que trop, et chil de deseur les murs le acuellent a
geter grandesmes pierres. Quant li clers vit chou,
si sake le coutel, si leur keurt sus, si les faisoit
aussi fuir devant lui comme bestes. (Lauer, LXXVI,
9-14)⁷⁶

Even though the reader is made aware of Aleaumes' capabilities as a soldier, he is given absolutely no physical description of the man himself. We are not told whether he is tall or short, heavy or thin, bearded or bald. Such personal facts are never revealed in the work. There are no portraits of individuals as such, but of classes or groups of people. The warrior or soldier is described, as previously noted, in terms of his valor and prowess, or his cowardice. The same sort of general description is also applied to the clergy; they are mentioned in terms of how they fulfill their role as men of the church, responsible for giving communion and blessing, and hearing confession. Their role is a very official and convenient one; they are called upon in moments of duress to assure the crusaders of the righteousness of their actions. Before the attack on Zara, the people of the city, knowing the vengeful nature of the Venetians, had obtained a letter from Rome saying

⁷⁶ "When he was inside, more than too many Greeks ran at him, and those on the walls began to throw great stones at him. When the clerk saw that he drew his sword and ran at them, making them flee before him like beasts."

that anyone doing harm to them would be excommunicated. Now the threat of excommunication in the Middle Ages was not to be taken lightly, for it doomed one to eternal damnation. In spite of such a dire threat, only two crusaders, Simon de Montfort and Enguerrand of Boves, refused to attack the city. Two members of the clergy were later sent to Rome where they secured apostolic pardon for the errant crusaders.

Before the first attack on Constantinople, Robert de Clari tells us that they "se confesserent tout et quemenierent, car il doutoient molt a ariver par devers Coustantinople" (Lauer, XLI, 41-42). But, as they had little difficulty in obtaining entry into the city, the clergy were not further needed. During the second siege of the city, however, the Crusaders were repelled and began to have serious doubts as to the righteousness of their actions and were fearful that they were being punished for their sins. The clergy took counsel and pronounced the battle righteous,

. . . car anchienement avoient esté chil de le chité obedient a le loi de Rome, et ore en estoient inobedient, quant il disoient que li lois de Romme ne valoit nient, et disoient que tout chil qui i crooient estoient chien; et disent li vesque que par tant les devoit on bien assalir et que che n'estoit mie pechiés, ains estoit grans aumosnes. (Lauer, LXXII, 10-16)⁷⁷

⁷⁷ ". . . for formerly those of the city had been obedient to the law of Rome, and now were disobedient to it, when they said the law of Rome was worth nothing, and said

They preached a fiery sermon, depicting the Byzantines as traitors and murderers, "pireur que Juifs." The Crusaders were encouraged to attack then, with righteous zeal, and having confessed themselves and taken communion, they gathered together all the women of dubious virtue and sent them far away from camp on a ship. This indication of the power of the clergy to persuade the soldiers that their attack was just illustrates also the spirit of the army. They believed that God was no longer on their side. It is evident that Robert de Clari, like most of his companions, had no suspicion of the ulterior motives of the leaders of the Crusade; they had taken the cross to liberate the Holy Land from the Infidel, and the idea of attacking a Christian empire was inconceivable to them. From his chronicle we are able to judge the success of propaganda put forth by the leaders of the movement. "Pour les promener de Venise à Zara, de Zara à Corfu, de Corfu à Constantinople," writes Albert Pauphilet, "il fallait leur démontrer que c'était le chemin, et le seul, de la Terre Sainte." He concludes, "Les chefs ne pouvaient commander qu'après avoir convaincu."⁷⁸ The clergy realized that the

that all those who believed in it were dogs. And the bishops said they were right to attack, that it was not a sin, but a good act."

⁷⁸ Albert Pauphilet, "Sur Robert de Clari," Romania, LVII (1931), 293.

only way to direct the army was to dominate it, and that the only force which was able to exercise such a domination was the religious element. So long as the events unfolded as predicted, so long as the crusaders won their battles, they would believe that God sanctioned their actions. But with the first serious setbacks, their faith was shaken by doubt as to the righteousness of their actions. It was at this point that the clergy was called upon to boost the morale of the soldiers and to encourage them in their mission. Thus we see that the role of the clergy was largely a supportive one; they exercised their official function when called upon to do so, but did little, if anything, to direct the Crusade toward its supposed goal, the attack upon the Infidel in Egypt.

The world of the Crusader was essentially a masculine world, devoid of feminine influence. Indeed, the role of women in this Crusade and their place in the chronicle are secondary. Robert de Clari mentions the banishment of "foles femmes" from the midst of the army, as atonement for what might have been unacceptable behavior on the part of the Crusaders:

Et quemanda on que on quesist et que on ostant toutes les foles femmes de l'ost et que on les envoiast bien loin en sus de l'ost; et on si fist que on les mist toutes en une nef, si les envoia on bien loins de l'ost. (Lauer, LXXIII, 16-20)⁷⁹

⁷⁹ "And it was commanded that all the easy women of the army be sought out and that they be sent far away from

One other mention of women occurs in reference to two statues found in front of the money exchange in Constantinople. Of bronze, the two statues of women were so well made and so natural in appearance that they were "si beles que trop." Robert de Clari describes the major attraction of the statues:

Si tendoit li uns de ches ymages se main vers Occident, et avoit letres escrites seur lui qui disoient: "De vers Occident venront chil qui Constantinoble conqueront"; et li autres ymages tendoit main en un vilain lieu, si disoit: "Ichi," fait li images, "les boutera on." (Lauer, XCI, 5-10)⁸⁰

This is the sort of crude humor which would have appealed to a rude soldier, so much in fact that he catalogues the two statues as being among the eleven marvels of Constantinople. There are in the chronicle other mentions made of women, but they are always confined to their usual role of being married or producing heirs, and so do not merit special attention.

Except for episodic sidelights, no major characters are delineated to any extent, with the exception of the Doge of Venice (Enrico Dandolo) whom Robert de Clari refers to simply as "li dux." This character is however portrayed

the army; and so they were all put in a ship and sent far away from the army."

⁸⁰ "One of these statues held her hand extended toward the West, and had letters written on it which read: 'From the West will come those who will conquer Constantinople'; and the other statue held her hand in a vile place, and said, 'Here,' read the statue, 'we will stuff them.'"

to a greater degree than any other noble in the movement. Robert de Clari neglects to mention that this elderly Venetian is virtually blind as a result of a brawl in Constantinople some years earlier, and has therefore a private cause for revenge. He does however feel compelled to insist upon the monetary concerns which preoccupy the Doge. Robert de Clari bears no malice against the Doge for his practical, even greedy, considerations but does often mention him in connection with money and power. The Doge himself must have been a prepossessing person to set sail at a rather advanced age to conquer an empire, and it is apparent that Robert de Clari did not comprehend the subtle workings of this financial wizard, whose aim was, as Ernle Bradford, authority on the Fourth Crusade, contends,

. . . no less than to place upon the throne of the ancient Byzantine Empire a pretender who would be permanently in debt to his protectors, or . . . to capture Constantinople itself and take for the Venetian Republic, in his grandiloquent phrase, "one half and one quarter of the Roman Empire."⁸¹

Indeed, Robert de Clari seems continually to underestimate the villainy of the Venetians. There is no bitterness in his tone when he reports the enormous debts the Crusaders owe their shipbuilders. He does not draw any inferences from the willingness of the Venetians to accompany them on the Crusade, nor does he register surprise or

⁸¹ Ernle Bradford, The Sundered Cross (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), p. 5.

indignation at the Venetian suggestion that they attack Zara. If he became dissatisfied with the Venetians, it was a subtle effect, caused by a series of small disagreements rather than the result of any major dispute.

Such a subtle change is seen in Robert de Clari's view of himself and his companions. They are first crusaders, "croisés"; then they are called pilgrims, "pelerins," and finally, they are named the French, "li franchois." Peter Dembowsky presents the following table in his book, La Chronique de Robert de Clari: Etude de la Langue et du Style; the table illustrates the frequency of the use of these three terms:

	Chap. I-XLIII	Chap. XLIV-fin
Croisés	19	0
Pelerin	22	26
Franchois	0	51

He offers two explanations for the transformation of the "croisés" to "franchois," the first of which is "la diminuation progressive de l'esprit de croisade chez les membres de l'expédition." The second reason he gives is "un fait de nature linguistique":

Les Francois sont . . . ceux qui parlent franchois . . . dès que les croises se sont trouvés dans un pays où leur langue n'était pas comprise, ils ont senti se reserrer de plus en plus le lien linguistique qui unissait leurs divers éléments et ont peu à peu pris conscience de leur qualité de "Franchois", ce qui

expliquerait l'usage de plus en plus fréquent de ce terme à mesure que la chronique avance.⁸²

The second justification seems the more reasonable of the two, for nowhere else in the chronicle is found information to support Robert's dissatisfaction with the Crusade itself. Indeed, he reported in all innocence Montferrat's ironic question: "ou vaurrés vous passer, ne en quel tere de Sarassins vaurés vous aler?" Nor does he mention any interchange with the Greeks, other than would be normal between two warring peoples.

The third type of description found in the chronicle is description of tourist attractions, expressing the wide-eyed wonder of the beholder. There is, in fact, an entire section of the chronicle devoted to a sort of tourist guide to Constantinople. Obviously much impressed with what he saw, Robert de Clari set down his impressions in his manuscript. His sightseeing venture begins at the palace of Boukoleon,⁸³ composed of five hundred rooms, made of gold mosaic, and containing at least thirty chapels, the largest being "le Sainte Capele."⁸⁴ Here Robert de

⁸² Peter Florian Dembowski, La Chronique de Robert de Clari, Etude de la Langue et du Style (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1963), p. 68.

⁸³ For this, and subsequent shrines Robert de Clari visits, consult the map of Constantinople, found in the Appendix.

⁸⁴ McNeal, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 103, n. 101: "This is the celebrated church of the Blessed Virgin of the Pharos (lighthouse). It was begun by

Clari describes in great detail the magnificence of the Chapel and adds that "on ne vous porroit mie aconter le grant biaute ne le grant nobleche de chele capele" (Lauer, LXXXII, 18-19). The relics found in this chapel are of great interest to him, and he names many of them. Found there were two large pieces of the True Cross, iron from the Holy Lance, two nails from the crucifixion, a large phial of Jesus' blood, the tunic He wore on Calvary, the Crown of Thorns, Mary's robe, the head of John the Baptist, and "tant d'autres rikes saintuaires illuec, ne le vous porroie mie aconter ne dire le verité" (Lauer, LXXXII, 33-35). He then adds the story of two relics, found in the Chapel, of which he previously forgot to tell us, a tile and a towel, both representing the True Icon. He also mentions still another relic in the Chapel, a painting of St. Dimitrius. What a treasure trove for the relic-conscious pilgrim! His next stop is the palace of Blachernae, so full of treasure that "on ne le vous saroit mie decrire ne aconter le grant nobleche ne le grant riqueche de chu palais" (Lauer, LXXXIII, 36-38). From Blachernae he journeys to the Hagia Sophia, the Church of Holy Wisdom. In addition to the richness of the Hagia Sophia, Robert de

Constantine V Copronymous (741-55) and completed by Michael III (842-67) and was included in the group of buildings composing the Great Palace. Robert's list of relics preserved in this church is strikingly confirmed by the account of Anthony of Novgorod, who made a pilgrimage to Constantinople about 1200, and who refers to it as 'a little church of the Blessed Virgin' in the 'imperial Golden Palace.'"

Clari dwells upon the curative powers of certain instruments in the church. There were columns which cured various ills when one rubbed against them, and there was one tube, a sort of suction device, which, when put in the mouth, would suck out all the sickness. These were novelties which must have greatly impressed Robert de Clari. In front of the Hagia Sophia was found a great equestrian statue, with nests of live herons on the croup of the horse and on the head of the rider. The Church of the Seven Apostles,⁸⁵ so named for the bodies of seven apostles Robert de Clari reported were found there, was the next stop he made en route to the gate called the Golden Mantle. Lettering on a copper statue of a nobleman proclaimed that those who would reside one year in Constantinople would be as rich as he was. A second gate, named the Golden Gate, was ornamented with two giant copper elephants. It was through this gate that victorious emperors would return to the city. The Hippodrome made a great impression on Robert de Clari, not only because of the physical dimensions of the stadium, but also, he took special note of the larger-than-life-sized copper statues of man and beast which adorned the walls

⁸⁵ McNeal, The Conquest of Constantinople, p. 108, n. 109: "This is the church of the Holy Apostles. It contained the relics of one apostle (St. Andrew), not seven, and also the relics of St. Luke and St. Timothy. This famous church was built by Justinian on the site of an older church of the Apostles built by Constantine; it was the model for St. Mark's of Venice . . ."

of the arena. He tells us that formerly they played as if by enchantment, but that they do so no more!

Certainly not on the Constantinople Bureau of Tourism's list of suitable attractions was the statue of two women Robert de Clari visited. After a morning of relic-viewing, the statue unquestionably provided a change of pace for the busy sightseer.⁸⁶ An even greater marvel he reports were the two columns of prophecy which he visited at the end of his tour. It seems that the columns were hollow inside and equipped with stairs so that it was possible to climb to the top where hermits lived. And on these columns were pictured all the great events which had befallen Constantinople and those which would come to pass in future. The problem was that no one could understand what event was predicted until it had happened, and then, with careful scrutiny, one could decipher what had been predicted.

From his description of the various sights he saw in the city, it is apparent that Robert de Clari was an ardent tourist who viewed the marvels of the city with wide-eyed wonder. Indeed, they must have seemed truly magnificent to the poor knight from Clari-les-Pernois! This section of the chronicle occupies 299 lines, proportionately speaking a large segment of the total if one remembers that the first siege of Constantinople filled 323 lines, and both

⁸⁶ See quotation, p. 70.

major digressions were completed in 567 lines. It is possible to postulate on the significance of these proportions in relation to what was important to Robert de Clari. First of all, he set himself the task of recounting the story of how Constantinople was conquered, who the conquerors were, and why they went there. From the length of the two major digressions it can be inferred that he felt a need to inform his reader of any relevant background material and that it was a task he took seriously. If we compare the 567 lines of the two major digressions to the 560 lines of battle description of the first and second sieges of Constantinople, it is clear that Robert de Clari's urge to describe major battles was equal to the need he felt to inform the reader of past events. He was interested then in more than just fighting the battle; he was interested in preserving an account of that event in which he participated. He was aware of other things too, the sights of the cosmopolitan city of Constantinople, and he recorded the impressions of these marvels in his chronicle, thus enlarging our picture of the simple soldier from Picardy, Robert de Clari.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The Fourth Crusade was, as we have seen, betrayed by its leaders, cheated by the Venetians, torn asunder by personal intrigue, private vendetta and greed, and, at the very least, not given the strong motivating influence it deserved from the Church. That an endeavor, Christian in its inception and righteous in its motives, could wander so far astray so easily attests to the fact that all that happened was not by chance, but by design accomplished. The chronicle of Robert de Clari does not reveal any of these ulterior motives, except perhaps personal revenge, and yet it stands as a valuable historical document. It is an eye-witness account of the Crusade by one who had no axe to grind, no motive for personal vengeance. While much of the historical fact in the chronicle is erroneous, this does not detract from its value as an historical source. Robert de Clari in all probability did not have access to the numerous councils held by the great barons; the dialogue and actions he attributes to them then are imaginary. And this is precisely the value of his work: it reflects the attitude and opinion of the soldier to what was happening around him. So, though his account of what the leaders

said is fictitious, the reaction of Robert de Clari, soldier of the ranks, is true. He exposes the mind and heart of the mass of those who filled the ranks of the Fourth Crusade, the simple soldier, pious, gullible, and unsophisticated.

From a literary standpoint the chronicle represents one of the earliest attempts to relate in French prose a French venture. Robert de Clari was not a writer by profession, and his chronicle mirrors not only his own inabilities, but reflects also the inadequacy of the French language at this time to express in prose an historical composition. Chronologically, he was a contemporary of Chrétien de Troyes and Marie de France, and their literary merit far surpasses his. But they were dealing, it must be remembered, in poetry, not prose, and they were writing in the realm of the imagination, unencumbered by fact. And, they were both writers by profession. Robert de Clari was a soldier by profession and his chronicle no more than mémoires written with an amazing objectivity. It is difficult to estimate to what degree he was aware of the effectiveness of the stylistic devices he utilized in setting down his chronicle. Long narrative passages interspersed with lengthy digressions, seasoned with snatches of dialogue, unusual and interesting vignettes, and liberally sprinkled with faits divers, the chronicle reveals a man of some

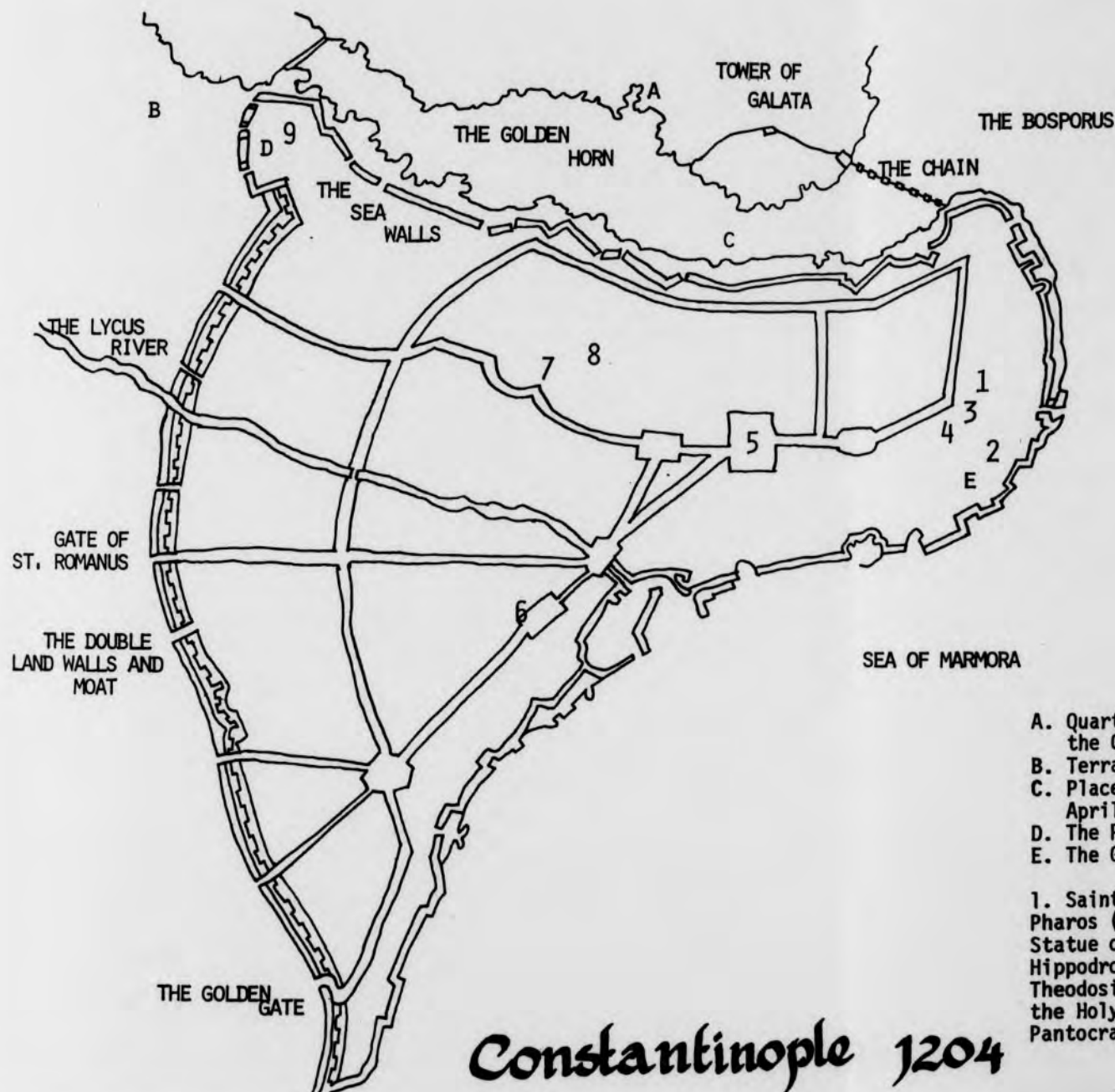
literary talent, a soldier, unsophisticated, and even at times crude, nevertheless a man above all, supremely human. That he can re-create before us, nearly eight hundred years later, a picture of the thirteenth-century crusade, and that he can re-create it with such vitality and vividness, attest to his literary and historical merit.

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- A. Quarters of the Crusaders and Venetians across the Golden Horn
- B. Terrain of the Battle of July 17, 1203
- C. Place of the Great Attack of the Sea Walls, April 12, 1204
- D. The Palace of Blachernae
- E. The Great Palace (Boukoleon, Bouke de Lion)

- 1. Saint Sophia 2. The Church of the Virgin of the Pharos (the Holy Chapel) 3. Column and Equestrian Statue of Justinian (Eracles the Emperor) 4. The Hippodrome (the Games of the Emperor) 5. Column of Theodosius 6. Column of Arcadius 7. The Church of the Holy Apostles 8. The Church of Christ the Pantocrator 9. The Church of the Virgin of Blachernae

Constantinople 1204

The Fourth Crusade

